THE RELIGION OF NATURE CONSIDER'D:

To which is added, A

POSTSCRIPT;

CONTAINING

Reflections on Mr. *Chubb*'s *Diſcourſe concerning Reaſon*, &c. ſo far as it reſpects this Subject.

Non dat Natura Virtutem, ars eſt bonum fieri.

Sen.

Mortalis Natura non capit ſcientiam, niſi quæ veniat extrinſecus.

Lactant.

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MDCCXXXI.

THE PREFACE.

THE following Sheets are the Produce of ſome leiſure time, which the Author preſum'd he cou'd not better employ, than in enquiring into the Grounds and Reaſons of thoſe Poſitions which have been lately advanc'd in favour of Deiſm, and in Oppoſition to reveal'd Religion.

The Reader may obſerve, that he has not taken notice of one Author that has lately appear'd on that ſide of the Queſtion, except Mr. Chubb, whoſe Book fell into his Hands after the Pamphlet was finiſh'd, and preparing for the Preſs; and indeed his Deſign was not to engage in the Controverſy, but to conſider the reaſonableneſs of the Subject in general, and from

Mr. Locke's *notions of* innate Ideas, (*which firſt gave him the Hint*) *to ſhew that there cou'd be no ſuch thing as* innate Knowledge, *or* natural *impreſſion of Religion and Duty.*

It's preſum'd, that all Knowledge in theſe reſpects is owing to Revelation, (*i. e.*) *Education, Information, Example, or the Uſe of Means; and the Author is humbly of Opinion, that he has not miſapply'd the Word, in uſing it in this Latitude, becauſe what was not known before, be it* True *or* Falſe, Right *or* Wrong, *is as much a Revelation to him to whom it is communicated, as that which comes recommended by divine Authority.*

Upon this Suppoſition, he has took the Liberty to aſſert, that all Knowledge of God, and our Duty to him, is, and can be only acquir'd, and that natural Reaſon "*is not capable of itſelf, as* Lactantius "*ſays, of finding out the Truth, but by* "*hearing and learning of him, who alone* "*both knows and can teach it. For it* "*muſt needs be, ſays he, that all the ſeveral* "*Sects of Philoſophers were ſtrangers to* "*Truth, becauſe, being meer Men, and de-* "*pending upon their own Underſtanding* "*and Judgment, they wanted that Infor-* "*mation and Direction, which is only to* "*be had from the* Oracles of God *."

* De divino præmio.

If

If the want of a Divine Revelation was ſenſibly felt and lamented by the wiſeſt of Men in the Heathen World, there's good reaſon to believe, as the Author has preſum'd to aſſert, that the Goſpel was deſign'd to ſupply that Want; and therefore he has undertook to prove (how well, others muſt judge) that all the Knowledge which Mankind now have of God, and their Duty, ſuperior to what the Heathens ever had, is owing to that Diſpenſation, *and that only, ſince it is evident that they are grown wiſer in* Theory; *that is, they know more in theſe reſpects, than the wiſeſt among them were ever able to attain to.*

The Deficiencies that may probably appear in the firſt Section, *the Reader will find in ſome meaſure ſupply'd in the* fifth, *where the Author has took the Liberty with ſome Gentlemen that have writ in defence of* Natural Religion, *but to do 'em juſtice, are very far from being Advocates for its* Sufficiency in Matters of Knowledge and Duty *excluſive of Chriſtianity.*

Mr. Chubb *is the only one that will find himſelf particularly intereſted in this Undertaking; who that Gentleman is, the Writer knows not, but for his Good takes the liberty to adviſe him to inform himſelf better about the* Divine Attributes *and* Perfections, *before he either ſets himſelf to vindicate that part of his Book which is*

here

here examin'd, or presumes to write any more upon such an important Subject.

His own Principles sufficiently shew the Weakness *and* Worthlessness *of his Cause, and a Man that wou'd undertake to write in defence of* Atheism, *may from thence be furnish'd with Arguments as well to prove* there is no God, *as that he has made no* Revelation *of his Will to Mankind.*

This Gentleman, and others of his Complection, wou'd do well to consider seriously what great Injury and abominable Scandal they do to God and Religion, by their loose and precarious Principles, and how easy the Transition is from believing *nothing but what is within the Comprehension of their own Reason, to the* doing nothing *but what seems good in their own eyes. They'd do well to weigh and compare diligently the* Laws of Christianity *with other* Schemes *and* Institutes *of Religion which have obtain'd in the World,* viz. *With their own beloved* uncertain Scheme, *with* Gentilism, &c. *in order to see which is in reality most worthy of God, most perfect in it self, and bids fairest for the Benefits and Happiness of Mankind, which assuredly becomes the sovereign Being to take care of.*

If these Gentlemen are in any respect wiser than their Forefathers the Heathens were, it's presum'd, in the following Sheets,

that they are indebted to Chriſtianity for it, as indeed all civiliz'd Nations, that have expunged Polytheiſm, *and come into the Belief of one God only, are as well as they.*

The World had never wanted Deiſts, *that is, Men profeſſing ſuch a Belief, if* Nature *cou'd have ſuggeſted any ſuch important Truth; but it's very certain, that ſhe's either* abſolutely blind *or* very ſhort-ſighted *in this reſpect, and therefore was miſerably condemned to the* ſolitary Light of her own lamp, *as Mr.* Culverwell *calls it* *, *till* Life and Immortality were brought to light through the Goſpel.

The Author concludes, with deſiring the favour of the Reader to excuſe what Errors may have eſcaped the Preſs, occaſion'd by his Diſtance from it.

* Light of Nature.

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5. Phædri Fabularum Æſopiarum Libri V. notis Doctorum ſelectioribus, noviſque paſſim & Conjecturis & explicationibus illuſtrati: opera Tho. Johnſon.

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THE RELIGION of NATURE CONSIDER'D.

MY Intention in the enſuing Treatiſe being only to *conſider Natural Religion*, that is, to examine the Reality and Merits of it, whether there be any ſuch Religion or not, and how far it may be depended upon in the regular and devout Conduct of Men's Lives; I deſign not to engage with any particular Author that has writ in Defence thereof in Oppoſition to *revealed Religion*: but whatever the Conſideration of ſo important a Subject may produce before it is finiſhed, or whether ſome or other may not fall in my Way, that are on one or both Sides the Queſtion, is what I

cannot at preſent foreſee; nor ſhall I here make any Apology for, or provide againſt.

SECT. I.

THO' *human Reaſon* is that very eminent and diſtinguiſhing Faculty which gives us the Precedency of all our Fellow-Creatures here below; yet whether it is an *original* Inſtinct of Nature, an *innate* Quality or Property of the Soul, inherent in, and inſeparable from it, or is acquired and improved by Deductions made from ſuch Ideas as are conveyed into the Mind by *Senſation* and *Reflection*; is a Queſtion, on the Reſolution of which the whole Controverſy ſeems to me to depend. For if it is an *innate* Quality peculiar to, and inſeparable from, the Soul; then, methinks, it ſhould be the ſame in every Man: that is, every Man ſhould reaſon alike upon the ſame Object, ſhould perfectly quadrate and agree in the ſame thing, ſhould be entirely unanimous in their Sentiments and Definitions of *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *evil*, *&c.* But if in ſuch Inſtances they are not, nor ever were (under their preſent unhappy Circumſtances) of this agreeable Temper; ſince Men have ever wrangled and diſputed about things of the higheſt Conſequence and Concern, and have frequently miſtaken the one for the other, and called Good *evil*, and Evil *good*;

good; ſince the very Being and Eſſence of God has been queſtion'd and diſputed, (which, if there's any *innate* Principle in Nature, it's impoſſible it ſhould ever be:) then I think we may conclude, that there's no *original* Impreſſion of Knowledge or Duty inherent in, and inſeparable from, the Mind; but that it's *furniſhed*, as Mr. *Locke* ſays, *with the Ideas of ſenſible Qualities from external Objects*, and then again *furniſhes the Underſtanding with Ideas of its own Operation*, which he calls *Senſation* and *Reflection*. From whence we may conclude, that if its *Notices* or *Obſervations* be right, its *Reaſonings* and *Concluſions*, its *believing* or *doubting*, its *willing* or *refuſing*, may, and are very like to be ſo too; but if not, the ſame Cauſes will neceſſarily produce the ſame Effects; and if the Principles are wrong or miſtaken, the Concluſions will unavoidably be ſo too: which in Matters of Religion and Duty, is but a very ſlippery and ſandy Foundation to build upon. For in this caſe, Mankind muſt either have the ſame Perceptions, be influenced by the ſame Rules, and directed by the ſame Methods of Information and Inſtruction, at all times and in all places, or they'll never *walk by the ſame Rule, or mind the ſame Thing*. And pray what a monſtrous Medley of Religion and Devotion would it appear to be, to ſee (as the World has already ſeen) ſome wor-

ſhipping an *Ape*, ſome an *Onion*; ſome one ridiculous Object, ſome another; merely from thoſe different Perceptions and Notions, Ideas and Fancies, they've receiv'd and entertain'd?

Suppoſe a Man brought up in a deſolate Wilderneſs, among wild Beaſts that could convey no ſuch Impreſſions, what Notions would he have of God? Why, none. Suppoſe him educated among the Natives of *Peru*, who would he worſhip? who but their *Guaca's*, or Idols? By ſuch Suppoſitions and Imaginations as theſe, we may carry him into any Country, and place him among any People, and we ſhall find him a *Jew*, a Chriſtian, a Heathen, or the very ſame that they are whom he lives among, or converſes with.

But it may be objected, that he would do otherwiſe, if he was otherwiſe informed. True. But what a Man gets by Information, can never be ſuppoſed to come naturally; nor can any Notion or Paſſion, any Inclination or Opinion, be ſtrictly reputed ſo, that is ſo conveyed. The Word φυσις, it's true, may be taken to ſignify as well what is ſown or planted, as what grows ſpontaneouſly, and of its own accord. And in this ſenſe, what Education, Example or Cuſtom recommend, may in time become ſo habitual, as to be reputed *natural*; and then all Religion, all Opinions or Perſuaſions, be they ever ſo abſurd or ridiculous, are *natural*, becauſe ſo re-

recommended and enforced; as ſhall be ſhewn afterwards. But this, as I take it, is not their Meaning that plead for *natural Religion*; for then it would appear a whimſical Conceit *indeed*: But what they mean by it is, that there are certain Principles or Impreſſions originally ſtamp'd upon the Mind, previous to all Education, Example, or Information whatſoever; and then, I ſay, if there are ſuch, a Man would as naturally know them, as he does when he's hungry or weary, and it would be as hard to draw him off from, or induce him to diſcard them, as it is, and cannot but be, to make him believe, that human Life may be maintained and ſupported without eating and drinking.

Another Objection may be, that Mankind would have known ſuch and ſuch Duties, as the Belief of a God, the being dutiful to their Parents, *&c.* to have been incumbent upon them, had they taken care to keep and retain the Impreſſions of them upon their Mind. To which I anſwer, had they never ſinned, they had never wanted a perfect Knowledge of their Duty, nor Abilities to keep and perform it in every reſpect whatſoever. And this may ſuffice.

Again, if it be ſaid, that St. *Paul* ſpeaks in behalf of innate Principles, when he ſays, that *the* Gentiles *who have not the Law, do by Nature the things*, &c.* This, I

 own,

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

own, is a very material Objection, and of great weight. But I anſwer,

1. That all the antient Commentators interpret this not of the idolatrous *Gentiles*, but of ſuch as lived before the Law, as *Melcheſedec* and *Job*; or were Worſhippers of the true God, as *Cornelius*; or repented, as the *Ninevites*.

2. That Mankind had originally ſuch a *Law written in their Hearts*, is not to be deny'd; and that the Impreſſion of it might remain with ſome of them in After-Ages, is reaſonable to be ſuppoſed; and how it was *probably* kept and preſerved, will be ſhewn hereafter: but that the idolatrous *Gentiles* had any Footſteps of ſuch a Law among them, but what were adopted into the Laws of particular Countries; or that they ever would have thought of, or regarded ſuch a Law, had not the State, for ſeveral good Reaſons, requir'd it of them; is much to be queſtioned: for what one State accounted lawful, another reputed criminal. So that if there was really any ſuch *engraved* Law among them, it was either very much defaced, or differently impreſſed; it was either a negative Law to one, and a poſitive Law to another, or was no *natural Law* at all. But,

3. Suppoſing it to be a *natural Law*, it was undoubtedly a very imperfect one; which tho' God might reward with ſome degrees of Favour and Acceptance, yet could it be neither

ther ſo extenſive nor meritorious as that which is revealed in the Goſpel. For tho' *Cornelius* was a *devout Man, and one that feared God*; yet he was ordered to ſend for *Peter*, who *ſhould tell him words whereby he and all his Houſe ſhould be ſaved.*

4. St. *Paul* objected this to the *Jews*, who put a great ſtreſs on Circumciſion and ritual Performances; and thereby intimated to them, that the *Gentiles* merited as much by obſerving the *moral* Law, as they did by the *Moſaical*: But can only be ſuppoſed to ſpeak of ſuch *Gentiles* as had and obſerved ſuch a Law; which were but a very few, in compariſon of thoſe that either knew little or nothing of, or but little regarded it. And to ſay, that all Men may be wiſe and good without ſome Information and Aſſiſtance, becauſe ſome few are, is preſuming againſt common Experience, and provoking at leaſt ninety in a hundred to give us the lye.

As for what the Apoſtle ſays of *Conſcience*, it's very certain, that it's no farther faithful than it's informed; and with reſpect to the *Gentiles*, could but receive information in proportion to the Capacities and Opportunities they had of knowing and practiſing their Duty; which, if it was faithful ſo far, might very well be called a *good Conſcience*, becauſe no Evidence (which is the caſe of *Conſcience*) is required to declare more than it knows. Upon which account St. *Paul* pro-

feſſes, that he *had lived before God in all good Conſcience unto this day*, *i. e.* he had been an inveterate Enemy and Perſecutor of the Chriſtians; he had *made havock of the Church*, *entring into every Houſe*, *and haling Men and Women*, had *committed them to priſon*. This was the *good Conſcience* he had lived in, becauſe he acted, in theſe reſpects, according to the beſt of his Knowledge; he had followed the Dictates and Suggeſtions of his own Mind. But if this is Nature, and Men are inexcuſable that do ſo, the People in *Peru* may, with as good a Conſcience, fat and eat their Children, as we our Sheep; and he is as little to be blam'd that kills his Father, when grown old and uſeleſs, as he that hangs a Dog.

From the whole, I can ſee nothing in this Text of St. *Paul* that is abſolutely in favour of *innate Principles*. But if there are, and have always been, Men in all Ages and Nations, more intelligent, humane, and tractable, more ſober, conſiderate, and penetrating than the reſt; we may ſay, that ſuch Men have been great Inſtruments of doing good in their ſeveral Generations: but cannot fairly conclude, that there is any more of *Nature* in this, than there is in keeping to and following a good Rule or Example, when the Dictates of corrupt Nature ſtrongly ſuggeſt the contrary.

" If we enquire after the Laws of Nature, " *ſays* * *Biſhop* Taylor, by the Rules of Rea- " ſon, it's much to be fear'd we ſhall find it " hard to know whether there is really any " ſuch Law or not." It has been obſerv'd, that *Varro* reckon'd up two hundred and eighty eight Opinions concerning the chiefeſt Good, that were entertained by the wiſeſt and moſt knowing part of Mankind; " And " it's not likely, *ſays he*, that theſe Men " ſhould any more agree about the intricate " Ways and Turnings that lead thither, than " they could agree about the Journey's End." The truth is, what every one's particular Fancy led him to, that he purſued; and in whatſoever Enjoyment he thought Happineſs to conſiſt, that he took to be the *ſolum Bonum*, the moſt deſirable Good he cou'd aſpire to. Into ſuch Intricacies and Inconſiſtences are Men liable to fall, that follow *Nature* by *Reaſon*; and if they take their Meaſures of *Reaſon* from *Nature*, it's not very likely that they'll be wiſer or better than others were that have done ſo before.

If our modern Deiſts will undertake to prove, that there is ſuch a Faculty originally imprinted on the Mind as *natural Reaſon*, and that it is in all Men *conſtantly* and *immutably* the ſame; then I'll readily grant, that there may be ſuch a thing as *natural Religion*. But if this Faculty, call'd Reaſon, is nothing

* Ductor Dubitantium.

nothing elſe but the Reſult of *Senſation* and *Reflection*; if it is acquired only by conſidering, comparing, and connecting ſeveral complex Ideas, convey'd into the Mind by Recollection and Obſervation; if Men muſt firſt think before they can reaſon, and can only reaſon according to their preſent Notions and Conceptions of things: then I think we may conclude, that *true Religion* cannot always be the Reſult of ſuch Reaſoning; but muſt be right or wrong, true or falſe, *&c.* as the different *Opinions* and *Impreſſions* of Mankind do influence and direct.

Sodomy, *Inceſt*, *Adultery*, &c. are but Evils to him that thinks them ſo. Every Man is at liberty to purſue or neglect them, as the Dictates of his own Mind ſhall ſuggeſt and direct. And what if human Laws have here and there interpoſed, and made them penal, it is not becauſe they are in their own Nature evil, but becauſe they tend ſome way or other to the prejudice of thoſe Societies where they are ſo treated, and either hinder the Procreation of Children, the Union and Confederacy of Families, or are detrimental to the Rights and Properties of this or that particular Man.

Who would quarrel with a Man for doing what Nature enclines him to, if it was not that he did *this* or *that thing* contrary to the Laws of particular *Societies*? Who would ſay that *this* or *that* was a Crime, if

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it was not that the Laws of particular Nations had ſo defined it? *Socrates* lent his Wife to *Alcibiades*; and the Laws of *Athens* allowed Women to make uſe of other Men, if their Husbands were deficient. This, it's true, has been contrary to the Cuſtom of ſome other Places, and to the Sentiments of ſome other Men; but who will preſume to ſay, that either *Socrates* or the *Athenians* acted contrary to the Dictates of Nature, or that they had not as clear Ideas of Obligation and Duty as Men have now?

Seleucus married *Statonice*, his Wife, to *Antiochus*, his own Son, (as *Valerius Maximus* tells us) and thought he was in the right: *Antiochus* was in love with *Statonice*, and was afraid or aſhamed to own it, as thinking, no doubt, that he was in the wrong. *Cato*, from whom (as the ſame Author obſerves) all wiſe and good Men were called *Catones*, lent his Wife *Martia* to his Friend *Hortenſius*. And *Lycurgus*, the *Spartan* Lawgiver, would have elderly Men let out their Wives to thoſe who were moſt likely to ſupply the Defect of themſelves.

Can it be ſuppoſed, that theſe good Men did not all follow *Nature*? or that in ſuch Inſtances *Nature* rebelled againſt *Principle*, and betrayed them into ſuch Errors as they knew to be contrary to the Dictates and Apprehenſions of their own Minds? For my part, I have that good opinion of them, as

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to think that they acted in these Cases according to their *Conscience*; and yet it's evident our *Consciences*, at this distance of time, tell us quite another thing. One or other of us must be in the wrong; and who should it be but we, who are under the prejudice of *prescribed Laws*, and cannot therefore be at liberty to think and act as those whom *pure natural Reason* influences and directs? But to be serious:

Those strenuous Asserters of *Nature's Laws* would do well to give us a Catalogue of them, that we may see what they are, and wherein they differ from those which are acquired, or which *Education* or *Example* have recommended. It's not enough to cry down *revealed Religion*, merely because it is *revealed*; unless they shew us in what respects it differs from that which is *natural*, and wherein it contradicts those Notions and Apprehensions which *Nature* has imprinted upon all Mens Minds. If this is sufficient for Mens Information and Direction, there must needs be some one Principle, some one Position, wherein they are all agreed. It cannot be, that God has endowed different Men with different Sentiments, merely to have the Diversion of seeing them clash and interfere one with another; or that this should be thought by one Man an *incumbent Duty*, another should call it an *heinous Sin*, for

no

no other reaſon but becauſe their reſpective *Minds* or *Conſciences* ſo inform them.

What has the World been doing for above theſe ſeventeen hundred Years, to ſuffer it ſelf to be implicitly led into Notions and Opinions ſo vaſtly different from their own *natural Sentiments*, and from that *Theology* which before univerſally prevail'd? It's evident to every one, what the generality of Men thought of God, and their Duty to him, before the Promulgation of the *Goſpel*; and how oppoſite they were in their Sentiments of that one Principle which ſhould have been the *Baſis* and *Foundation* of all the reſt. One aſſerted a multiplicity of Deities, another did not believe that there was any; one was enclined to think the World had a beginning, another was perſuaded it never had; one accounts ſenſual Pleaſure the *Summum Bonum* of human Life, another calls it *Vox Pecudum*, or the Inſtinct of Beaſts. Theſe are all the Dictates and Suggeſtions of *Nature*. And for this reaſon (no doubt) both *Seneca* and *Tully* call her a God; becauſe ſhe had the knack of inſpiring Men with diſſonant and contradictory Sentiments, and reconciling them all upon this one Principle, the *Dictates of Reaſon*. It is this that made Mankind believe that *black* was *white*, and *white black*; but *Chriſtianity* ſtept in, and peremptorily determined which was which; and by endeavouring to bring them

them to be all of one mind, by inſtilling Notions and Sentiments contrary to what before they had ever thought of, has weaken'd the Credit and Reputation of this *favourite Goddeſs*, and induced them not to believe ſcarce a Word ſhe ſays. Surely the World muſt be very much tir'd with walking in the old beaten Path, that could ſuffer themſelves to be ſo eaſily and ſo implicitly led out of it; that could entertain Principles and Poſitions, in many reſpects, the very reverſe to their former Sentiments, and at the ſame time imagine them to be conſonant with Reaſon, when ſhe had before told them quite another thing.

One would be enclin'd to think, that either Mankind had no *natural Reaſon* before, or then loſt it; or, which I am more willing to believe, then found what they had before loſt: and therefore, from attempting to prove that there cannot poſſibly be any *Religion* in *Nature* properly ſo call'd; that is to ſay, that *Nature* being not always actuated by *right Reaſon*, cannot therefore direct us to *true Religion*; I'll try what can be ſaid for *Revelation*, in order to ſee whether all the *Knowledge* that Mankind now have, or ever had of *God and their Duty*, does not ſpring from that Source.

SECT.

SECT. II.

BY *Revelation*, I would be underſtood to mean all thoſe *pretended*, as well as *real* Diſcoveries which have been made to Mankind of the *Will of God*, in order to induce them to live accordingly. I'll not undertake to define how, or by what Methods ſuch Diſcoveries have been made; nor how we may diſtinguiſh one from another, ſo as to diſcern which is true and genuine, and which is not. The Word itſelf ſignifies to *explain* or *diſplay*, as Dr. *Hammond* obſerves, *ſomewhat that was before obſcure and covered*; and in this ſenſe, I diſtinguiſh it from *natural Reaſon*, becauſe, in a religious Reſpect, it *diſplays* or *diſcovers* to the Underſtandings of Men, thoſe Rules of Obedience and Duty, which the meer Light of *Nature* could not direct them to.

Now, as *Religion* may be defin'd to be a Reſignation of our Wills to the Will of God; or, an Obligation to do what ought not to be omitted, and to forbear what ought not to be done*: It ſeems very agreeable to *Reaſon*, that we ſhould know what the Will of God is, before we can reſign ourſelves to it, and that we cannot know what his

* Vide Woolaſton. Lactant. de Vera Religione.

his Will is, till it is diſcover'd to us. That *natural Reaſon* does not diſcover it, is evident; becauſe, then there would be no need of *Revelation* to ſupply that defect. It would be ſuperfluous and impertinent to *explain* or *diſplay* to Mankind what they knew before; or to tell them, that God had made ſuch or ſuch a *Revelation* of his Will, when it was apparently an *original Inſtinct* of Nature, an *innate Impreſſion* upon the Mind, which could no ways be obliterated or eraſed.

† No Man in any Age of the World ever pretended to preſcribe or give Laws to others merely from the Impulſe or Suggeſtion of his own Mind, becauſe he knew that there might be ſome or other that would have the hardineſs to diſpute it with him, having no better Authority to eſtabliſh them upon. But when by ſome Stratagem or other he had found means to make them believe that he either was, or had Intercourſe or Converſation with, a God; his Injunctions then had their intended Effect; and he did more by that one *Deluſion*, than by the beſt Arguments and moſt powerful Perſuaſions that *Reaſon* could furniſh him with. *Lycurgus*, *Romulus*, *Numa*, *Theopompus*, and many others, made uſe of this Stratagem with ſucceſs, in the eſtabliſhment of their reſpective Governments; but had there been a Law of Nature

† Wilkins. Lactant. lib. 1.

Nature directing them how to rule, and their Subjects how to obey, there had been no need of ſuch *pious Frauds*, as theſe were; nor had the People wanted to be aw'd into an implicit Obedience, becauſe the *Light of Nature* would have let them ſee both the Neceſſity and Expediency of it.

But this *Light* was become ſo exceeding dim, as to be totally extinct among the generality of People in thoſe times; and therefore Men of more enlarg'd Capacities, and better Underſtandings, were forc'd to make uſe of ſuch *Fetches* to reduce them to Reaſon, and to bring them under ſuch Regulation and Order, as was neceſſary to keep them within due bounds.

Gentes ſive Nationes dicuntur, ſays *Abaelard*, *quaſi tales quales genitæ vel natæ, hoc eſt ſine diſciplina legis quaſi pecudes viventes. Pagani, quaſi ruſtici & non urbani; qui nondum legibus civitatis ad rectè aut honeſtè vivendum inſtructi ſunt.* It was for this reaſon that the generality of their Governours were put to ſuch ſhifts to make them obedient and tractable, and not becauſe they'd tyrannize over them: And if either *real* or *pretended Revelation* was not ſtill to interpoſe, Mankind, I'll venture to ſay, as wiſe and knowing as they appear to be now, wou'd ſoon degenerate and become like them, and be

in every reſpect as rude and unpoliſh'd, as ignorant and untractable as they were.

It's not my buſineſs at this time to conſider the Merit or Demerit of thoſe ſeveral *Revelations* that are now abroad in the World; it's enough to ſhew that what Senſe the generality of Men have of *Religion* and *Duty* is principally owing to ſome or all of 'em; and that it is from thence, and not from *natural Reaſon* or *Inſtinct*, that they derive the *Knowledge* they pretend to. But the truth is, we've recovered the Uſe of our Legs by the help of this *Crutch*, and now we deſpiſe it, as a cumberſome unneceſſary Tool, only fit to entangle and throw us down; and therefore we are determin'd to lay it aſide, not becauſe we think we can walk without it, but becauſe it in ſome reſpects hinders us from walking our own pace. But to come to the point:

That the Knowledge which Mankind either now have, or ever before had of God and their Duty to him, proceeds entirely from *Revelation*, and not from *Nature*, is evident,

1. From the foregoing Conſiderations; namely, that Nature teaches us nothing. The Mind is a meer *tabula raſa*, originally without any Impreſſion, Stamp or Character whatſoever, (unleſs we'll ſuppoſe it the ſame with Brutes) but *capable* of any, and moſt apt to receive the firſt that offers, till exter-

nal

nal Objects furniſh it with diſtinct Ideas, and from thence collect Materials for it to work upon. *The Way of Man*, ſays the Prophet *Jeremy*, and with great truth, *is not in himſelf; it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps.* This is an Aſſertion that needs no Proof; every one's Experience and Obſervation will at once convince him of the Reality of it: and if he takes but a View of the different Tempers, Habits and Cuſtoms, the diſſonant Notions, Inclinations and Purſuits of Mankind in the World, he'll find it in all reſpects true.

I call that *Revelation* which conveys Sentiments and Notions into the Mind, which were not imprinted there before, and which it had never ſo much as thought of, but for ſome *exterior* Accident or Object, ſome Intimation or Information convey'd into it by the uſe of Means. What is thus communicated, is no more *natural* than the exotick Plants in a Garden, which the Ground may nouriſh and improve, but cannot produce; and if we are allow'd to make the Compariſon, we ſhall go near to find as much real Fruit in the one as we do in the other, where both are entirely neglected and uncultivated. Stinking Weeds and noiſome Refuſe may and will undoubtedly grow in both; but if either the one or the other bring forth profitable and wholeſome Fruit, if ever there is ſeen in either, one promiſing

Plant that can properly be call'd *Nature*'s Offspring, univerſal Experience has deceiv'd and miſled all Mankind; or the generality in all Ages and Places of the World have been unaccountably infatuated in contradicting and giving the lye to their own real Sentiments, and acting the very reverſe to the Dictates and Suggeſtions of their own Minds.

2. But it is farther evident, that *Revelation*, and not *natural Reaſon*, has ever had the prevailing Influence over the Minds of Men; becauſe wherever we look, or what Corner of the World ſoever we pry into, we ſhall find them doing ſomething as a Point of Religion and Duty, which no human Reaſon cou'd ever comprehend, and which cou'd never enter into any Man's Thoughts, if primitive Practice and the Example of preceeding Ages had not recommended it. Who ever wou'd have thought of imploring or appeaſing the Deity by Sacrifices; of erecting Altars, and burning Incenſe upon them, (which we know all civiliz'd Nations did for many Ages) had not ſuch Cuſtoms been handed down from primitive Example, and recommended by the Practice of former Times? Who can imagine that *Libations*, *Luſtrations*, *Funeral Solemnities*, and infinite other *Conceits* and *Ceremonies*, in practice almoſt in all Nations, wou'd have proceeded from the Dictates

of

of natural Reaſon? Or that *Oblations*, *Tithes*, *Divinations*, *Aſyla*, and publick *Feſtivals*, ſhou'd be ſo univerſally obſerv'd and practiſed every where, from a *meer* Impulſe of Mind, that their ſeveral *Deities* did expect and require them? Had theſe and ſuch like Cuſtoms proceeded from the Suggeſtions of Nature, all Mankind to this day muſt neceſſarily have retain'd and kept them up; becauſe what was a Law of Nature then, cannot but be ſo now, it being certain that no Circumſtances or Accidents can poſſibly alter or abrogate ſuch Duties as are confeſſedly the Reſult of ſuch a Law; nor can the generality of Men ever reject, or recede from them, tho' ſome, out of pique or paſſion, may. But by having been adopted into the Laws and Conſtitutions of many Nations, but not all; by appearing to be poſitive *Inſtitutions*, for which no other Reaſon can be given, but the Will and Authority of the *Inſtitutor*; by being *generally* receiv'd, but not *univerſally* practis'd; it ſeems pretty evident that they are the genuine Fruits and Effects of *Revelation*, and that from ſuch expreſs Laws once eſtabliſh'd, the Practice and Example of preceeding Ages recommended them to thoſe that ſucceeded. By this means, I humbly preſume, all *Knowledge*, as well *ſpeculative* as *practical*, as well *real* as *imaginary*, has been recommended and convey'd; and I'm the

rather inclin'd to be of this Opinion, becauſe all Mankind wou'd have had the ſame Notions, purſu'd the ſame Ends, and made uſe of the ſame Means, had they been actuated and influenc'd by ſuch Principles as are originally ſtamp'd and imprinted upon the Mind.

* *Iſocrates* tells us, that *Lycurgus* his Laws were not of his own deviſing or inventing, but what he had learn'd from the Practice and Example (ἀπὸ πραγμάτων καὶ μιμήσεων) of the antient *Athenians*. Some ſay that the *Grecians* deriv'd their Religion from the *Ægyptians*, others from the *Thracians*, and others, ſeemingly with better reaſon, from different Countries; becauſe, as Dr. *Potter* obſerves, almoſt every City had not only different Gods, but alſo different Modes of Worſhip: and the Reaſon he gives for it, was not becauſe their Minds and Conſciences were differently actuated and prepoſſeſs'd, but becauſe the Country was inhabited by Colonies of different Nations, and therefore did borrow from every one of theſe ſome Part of the religious Ceremonies, which they ſtill retain'd and obſerv'd †.

3. The great Correſpondency that there is and ever has been between People of different Nations both in *Opinions* and *Practices*, and the manifeſt Inconſiſtency of ſome of

* Panath. † Archæol. Gr. Vol. I. p. 184.

them

them with all the Modes of thinking we are able to conceive: The Harmony and Agreement that we may obſerve between very remote and diſtant Nations in their religious Ceremonies, and the Diſcord and Incoherency of ſome that are more contiguous and near; is another Proof that all ſuch *Opinions* and *Practices* are not *innate*, but *acquir'd*; not originally *imprinted* on, but *reveal'd* to the Mind. For otherwiſe, Propinquity of Places wou'd be apt to beget an Unity and Agreement of Sentiments; or ſuppoſing the Underſtanding capable of being deceiv'd and miſled, one ſide or the other, by that contrariety of Notions and Practices, wou'd be able eaſily to diſcern which was moſt conſiſtent with *Natural Reaſon*, or agreeable to thoſe Ideas of Good and Evil which are imprinted on the Mind. Contraries, we ſay, uſually explain and illuſtrate one another; and if the Mind is perplex'd with a Complication of confus'd Ideas, nothing better diſtinguiſhes and ſets them in a clear Light, than to ſee how Men, differently actuated and influenc'd, demean themſelves, or what Fruits and Effects ſuch claſhing Opinions reſpectively produce. If *Reaſon* is of any uſe at all, or if it has any *natural* or *innate* Apprehenſions of *Good* and *Evil*, *Right* and *Wrong*, it muſt, one wou'd think, be able to judge in this Caſe which was which;

but we find by Experience that it ſeldom can. We ſee plainly that even honeſt and well-meaning Men, Men that are both ſincere and diligent in their Search after Truth, are ſtill of the ſame Mind, retain the ſame Sentiments, purſue the ſame Ends, maugre the beſt Arguments, and, in the opinion of others, the moſt ſelf-evident Demonſtrations that can be produc'd: If we impute this to *Obſtinacy*, we probably injure them; if we call it *Stupidity*, every other Action of their Lives will convince us of the contrary; if we aſcribe it to *Reaſon*, we abſolutely diſapprove that Faculty, and imply there is no ſuch thing: but if we ſay the Prejudice of *Education*, or the Influence of *Example* has prepoſſeſs'd and engag'd them; if we ſay, that this or that Man wou'd have thought better, had he been better inform'd; we then, in my Opinion, aſſign a true Reaſon, and imply that *Revelation*, that is to ſay, *Information*, or *external* Means and Methods of Conviction, is the true Cauſe of it.

This Aſſertion, I own, is liable to ſome Objections, but they ſeem to me not to be of that weight, as to invalidate the common Obſervation and Experience of all Mankind. We muſt either ſay that Men thus habituated and influenc'd, are pre-engag'd by Notions and Opinions they'd before imbib'd, or that inveterate Obſtinacy,

and

and an incorrigible Reſolution to retain their old Principles, right or wrong, has occaſion'd it. There's no room, I think, to impute it to the Narrowneſs of Men's Capacities, or to a natural Imbecillity and Weakneſs of Judgment; for in the one Caſe we are liable to cenſure the wiſeſt of Men, and in the other we call in queſtion the Validity of human Reaſon: we either imply that all Mankind are under an abſolute Neceſſity of thinking as they do, or that they are not endow'd with Faculties capable of diſtinguiſhing Good from Evil, Right from Wrong. I do not ſay they are not, but this I ſay, they are very liable to be foreſtall'd and prepoſſeſs'd; and pray whence ſhou'd this come? Not, I imagine, from any Intimations or Suggeſtions of *Nature*, properly ſo call'd, but from the *Practice* and *Example* of thoſe that had the firſt forming of the Mind; which firſt Impreſſion is generally ſo riveted, as hardly, if at all poſſible, to be rooted out.

This, I preſume, will not be diſputed, that ſuch claſhing and contradictory Sentiments, ſuch inconſiſtent and interfering Opinions and Notions, cannot be the Reſult of Natural Reaſon, but muſt be the Effects of Cuſtom and Education; for according to *Horace* *,

* Sat. 3. lib. 1.

Nec

Nec natura poteſt juſto ſecernere iniquum,
Dividit ut bona diverſis, fugienda petendis:
Nec vincet ratio hoc, tantumdem ut peccet, idemque
Qui teneros caules alieni fregerit horti,
Et qui nocturnus Divûm ſacra legerit. Adſit
Regula, peccatis quæ pœnas irroget æquas.

Here, we ſee, he puts *Regula* in oppoſition to *Natura*, and makes this to define and determine what that cannot be ſuppos'd to do. *Nature* tells us what is good and what is evil, that is, what in our *Opinion* and *Judgment* is ſo or ſo; but it does not follow that this or that thing is really ſo, becauſe we think ſo: this is no way determinable but by ſome *poſitive* and *expreſs Law*, which I preſume the *Poet* here means by *Regula*; and that, whether it be right or wrong, I call *Revelation*, becauſe *Nature* cou'd never have determin'd which was which; nor had Mankind been liable to give an account of any of their Actions without ſuch a *Law*. St. *Paul* therefore muſt need be in the right, in ſaying that he *had not known Sin, but by the Law* *. For if Nature cannot abſolutely define what is right and what is wrong, how ſhou'd it be determin'd but by ſome ſuch *Law?* or how ſhou'd Men know

* Rom. vii. 7.

when

when they do as they ſhou'd do, and when they do not?

It was *Draco*'s Laws, and not any natural Inſtinct, that enclin'd the *Stoicks* to think that all Crimes were equal; and that he offended as much that malicioufly kill'd a Dog, as he that kill'd his Father: the Foundation of which Opinion ſeems to be, that he made all Degrees of criminal Actions capital, and puniſh'd one, as *Plutarch* in the Life of *Solon* tells us, as well as another with Death. This gave *Demades* occaſion to ſay, that *he writ his Laws in Blood, and not with Ink:* but if it was true what *Draco* alledg'd, that he had no great Offences to provide againſt when he made theſe Laws, but had provided againſt them by making ſuch; *Solon*, that came after, and abrogated them, found occaſion to diſtinguiſh, and to aſſign Degrees of Puniſhment proportionable to thoſe Degrees of Wickedneſs which in his time Men were advanced to.

From ſuch Laws occaſionally made, and differently diſpers'd, Men came to be of different Opinions as to Right and Wrong; and what, I beſeech you, firſt occaſion'd ſuch Laws, but the Defects and Imperfections of *Natural Reaſon?* which by virtue of it's own Light was not able to diſtinguiſh which was which. Thus much are Men beholden to *Revelation* for what they know; but ſet it once aſide, and even *Nature* herſelf will

not

not be aſham'd to tell us ſhe knows nothing, as is very certain ſhe does not. But,

4. What Reaſon can be aſſign'd that God ſhou'd endow Mankind with *natural* or *innate Principles* of Knowledge and Duty, and leave all their other Capacities and Faculties to be acquir'd and improv'd? Do not we learn to talk by hearing others? And are not our ſeveral Senſes made beneficial and uſeful, by having proper Objects to work upon? Do not we diſtinguiſh Perſons and Things by ſuch *Titles* and *Characters* as others before us had ſet upon them? And do not we learn by their *Example* and *Direction* how to apply thoſe Parts and Capacities with which God has bleſs'd us, to thoſe reſpective *Ends* and *Purpoſes* for which they are adapted? I am inclin'd to think we ſhou'd be as ready to walk upon *all-four* as the Beaſts do, if we had none before to ſhew us the way how to walk erect; and that we ſhou'd be as much afraid of a *Man* as we are of a *Tyger*, if we had only liv'd among, and convers'd with *Beaſts*. Of what uſe wou'd our Eyes be to us, more than thoſe of other Animals are to them, if we had not been ſhewn how to uſe and apply them? And what cou'd we have done with our Hands any more than Monkeys, if we had not been taught by the Inſtances and Examples of others how to employ them? Theſe and all our other Senſes become ſerviceable

viceable to us, and to all the Ends and Purpoſes of Life only by Direction and Application; and yet the Knowledge of God and our Duty, is natural to us, for which we owe nothing to *Education*, *Example*, or the *Uſe of Means!* A fine way of reaſoning! As if the moſt uſeful and valuable *Accompliſhments*, *Accompliſhments* that denote us what we are, and *eminently* diſtinguiſh us from the reſt of our Fellow-Creatures, were given *us gratis*; and all other *Properties* and *Faculties* (which one wou'd take to be Introductions and Inlets to 'em,) were only *attainable* by Application and Uſe; or, as if *Reaſon* was given us to direct us how to uſe our *Senſes*, and yet our *Senſes* not capable of being apply'd to any real Uſe without the Direction and Aſſiſtance of our kind Friends and Neighbours.

All that can be ſaid of Man is, that he's an Animal,

Mentis capacius altæ *.

——— *Separat hoc nos*

(Says *Juvenal*)

A grege mutorum, atque ideo venerabile ſoli
Sortiti ingenium, divinorumque capaces,
Atque exercendis capiendiſq; artibus apti,
Senſum a cœleſti demiſſum traximus arce,
Cujus egent prona, & terram ſpectantia †.

* Ovid. Metam. Lib. 1. † Juv. Sat. 15.

He's

He's endow'd with Faculties, it's very true, *capable* both of knowing and doing his Duty: But can he either know the one, or do the other, before he's told them? or is there any other way of coming to the Knowledge of them but by the Direction, Aſſiſtance or Example of thoſe he either converſes with or has heard of? If this is not *Revelation*, I'm at a loſs to know what the *word* means: If what is communicated and recommended by another, and what a Man had never thought of, but by ſome ſuch Methods of Information, be not as oppoſite to *innate Knowledge* as any *Revelation*, commonly ſo call'd, can be ſuppos'd to be; then my Deſign in this Attempt is entirely defeated, and I am ſtill to learn what the Terms, *natural* and *revealed* mean: But if I ſhou'd happen to be right in my Conjecture, and have properly apply'd the Words, *innate* and *acquir'd*, to illuſtrate and explain them; then, I think, the Queſtion is not, whether all *Revelation* is uſeleſs and impertinent (for that ſeems to me impoſſible) but whether this which we call the *Goſpel* is ſo or not: That is to ſay, whether the World had not ſufficient Light and Information both of *Knowledge* and *Duty* before its Promulgation; and whether the *Doctrines* and *Duties* recommended by any former *Revelation*, are more conſonant with the

the Notions and Opinions of an unprejudic'd Mind, than theſe are. But to return;

We do not attain to any Perfections or Accompliſhments in Life, without gradual Improvements, and ſlow Progreſs. We are Children before we are Men, and Men often in brutiſh Paſſions before we are ſo in ſedate Judgment. The Meat is put into our mouths, before we know what it is, or how to uſe it; and it is with hard Study much Expence and great Application, that we attain to any competent Knowledge, any uſeful Learning above the common Herd of Mankind. Are human Attainments ſo hard to be acquir'd? Do they demand and call for ſo much Induſtry, Expence and Study, before we can, in any tolerable degree, be Maſters of them? Is any one Endowment or Faculty of uſe to us, till we are ſhewn the uſe of it, and are taught how to apply it? And can we imagine that thoſe of the moſt exalted Nature and Perfection, thoſe that are the ultimate reſult of all our Obſervations and Reaſonings, ſhou'd be given us for nothing? This I think is ſetting the *Effect* before the *Cauſe*, and from inviſible things undertaking to prove that there are things manifeſt and viſible. It's ſuppoſing us *wiſe* and *knowing* in things *pertaining* to God, but wholly *ignorant* and *unexperienc'd* in thoſe that *relate* to our ſelves. It's in ſhort implying an *unavoid-*

able

able Neceſſity of being *wiſe unto Salvation*, but a meer *Chance* or *Uncertainty* whether we *attain* to any real Knowledge of our *ſelves* and the *things* about us or not. But there's no need to take much pains to detect and diſapprove ſo manifeſt an Abſurdity. It's very certain that *Inſtruction* and *Example*, *Obſervation* and *Experience* teach us what we know in relation to our ſelves, and the things of this Life; and it's as certain, that we attain to the Knowledge of God and our Duty to him by the ſame, or ſome ſuch Methods of Information and Inſtruction. We've an Inſtance of ſome *American Natives* now in the Kingdom, that have no manner of Notion of a Deity, unleſs we'll call ſome wild Conceits of the Sun and Moon ſuch. It's a great queſtion whether they ever ſo much as thought of a *Creator*, or that they themſelves are *created*. But propoſe it to them; tell 'em that all Creatures had a Beginning, and that nothing can make it ſelf; and they'll readily imagine that there's a Being ſuperior to themſelves, but where to find him, or how to know him, what he is, or how he operates, is impoſſible for them ever to find out, unleſs you can be able to carry their Imaginations beyond all viſible Objects, and bring them to underſtand that he's an inviſible *Being*, without Body, Parts or Paſſions, as we have.

By

By ſuch gradual ſteps and progreſs, all Knowledge is and has been inculcated and recommended; and he that will tell me that a Man may attain to it without ſuch Means, may make me believe that he'll ride, walk, and talk, or perform any Action of human Life, as ſoon as he's born.

Grotius *, it's true, obſerves from *Tully*, that there are *quædam prima Naturæ*, or certain Principles of Nature, which a Man wou'd neceſſarily obſerve and follow, without any external Rule or Direction to inſtruct and guide him; but if we take a View of them, we ſhall find them all reducible to that one Principle of *Self-preſervation*, and may plainly ſee that Brutes have a much better Inſtinct, and clearer Capacities to foreſee Dangers, and guard againſt them than we have.

It's natural, he ſays, to deſire to have all the parts *of the Body ſtreight and well* proportion'd, rather than deform'd and crooked: But how does he know that, unleſs it had been tranſmitted to him from a ſtrange Country, where the People are all ſo diſtorted; and thoſe People had never ſeen any otherwiſe form'd? I am enclin'd to think, that if there ever had been any ſuch People, they'd have had other Notions of Shapes and Proportions than we have, and thought us the greater Monſters of the two, for being in

* De Jure, &c. lib. 1.

ſuch reſpects ſo very different from themſelves. *Cuſtom* and *Familiarity* wou'd have reconcil'd them, as it does moſt other People, to that which is otherwiſe ſurprizing and ſtrange; and it wou'd be no kind of wonder to hear them count that the greateſt Beauty, which, according to our notion of that Accompliſhment, is the moſt deform'd and ugly.

Upon this Conſideration I think the foreſaid great Man * much nearer the Truth for ſaying, that Nature is *ſometimes* put *pro eo quod recepti paſſim moris eſt*, that is to ſay, for a received or known Cuſtom; and if he had ſaid *generally*, I'm inclin'd to think that few wou'd have oppos'd him. *Doth not even Nature itſelf*, ſays St. *Paul, teach you, that if a Man hath long hair it's a ſhame to him?* No, ſays *Grotius, Nature*, properly taken, teaches no ſuch thing, concerns not herſelf about it, but leaves it indifferent, and accordingly ſome People wear their Hair long; but it's *Cuſtom* that has determin'd it, and therefore is call'd by ſome *a ſecond Nature*, becauſe long habit and practice have made it as familiar to a Man, and as reaſonable, in his Opinion, to be obſerv'd and maintain'd as any uncontroverted Principle whatſoever. So that what the Apoſtle in this place ſeems to impute to the *Law of Nature*, is nothing elſe but the *Law of Na-*

* Lib. 2.

tions;

tions; and accordingly the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* calls *all Men vain by Nature* †, and St. *Paul* *, that they are *by Nature the Children of Wrath*; ſignifying thereby that univerſal Practice and Cuſtom had eſtabliſh'd Idolatry every where ‖, and that it was become as habitual and durable as if *Nature* herſelf, properly ſo call'd, had really recommended and eſtabliſh'd it; or as if it was one of thoſe *firſt Principles*, as ſome are pleas'd to call them, which all Men cannot but aſſent and adhere to.

Theſe Conſiderations laid together, convince me that all the *Reaſon in Nature* cannot poſſibly direct us to, nor aſſiſt us in *Religion*, or the Duties we owe to God, our Neighbour, and our ſelves; but that all we know of them is owing to *Revelation*, that is, to *Education*, *Cuſtom*, *Example*, &c. which, I dare ſay, even the *Deiſts* themſelves will not allow to be good Rules in all Inſtances; for if they do, their *natural* Syſtem will appear to have its Foundation upon that very Baſis, and owe its Perfection (if ever it attains to it) to ſome expreſs Laws before preſcrib'd. For it will not ſuffice to ſay, that *their* Reaſon dictates and directs ſo and ſo, but they muſt bring others to be of the ſame mind; nay, thoſe others muſt agree with them upon the very firſt

† Wiſd. xiii. 1. * Eph. ii. 3. ‖ Grot. Hamm.

Motion; and if any one *Propoſition* appears either *diſputable*, or to have been ever *diſputed*, that muſt be *entirely quaſh'd*, as abſolutely inconſiſtent with their *Scheme*.

I ſay *entirely quaſh'd*, becauſe what has been diſputed once, is liable to be ſo again, according as Mens Notions and Opinions vary, or their Capacities become decurtated or enlarg'd: for tho' Truth is always the ſame, and cannot be otherwiſe; yet if Men, thro' the Blindneſs of their Minds, the Weakneſs of their Judgments, or the Influence of their Paſſions, ſhou'd not be able to retain it, I imagine they'd be much at a loſs where to find it again; and thoſe very *Axioms* which paſs now for ſelf-evident Truths, about which there's not the leaſt diſpute, wou'd then want a *Themiſtocles** to clear up and explain them. This has been the caſe of the World before, and why ſhou'd it not be ſo again? If Mankind once deviated from Truth, and from all thoſe Rules of holy Living, and modeſt Converſation, which, no doubt, were given them at firſt ſetting out, to ſquare their Lives by; I know nothing but *Revelation* that can keep them ſteady now. But ſet that aſide, that is, burn your Books, renounce human Learning, obſerve no Cuſtoms, follow no Examples; and then tell me, ye worthy Champions of Reaſon, how long you'll re-

* Grævius in Tull. Off. Corn. Nep. in vita.

tain

tain those Truths you seem now to be poſ-ſeſs'd of, and what helps *Nature* will afford you better than those which you now have by the favour of *Revelation?* It's very wrong, not to say ungrateful, to turn away an old Servant that has nurs'd you up, and taught you all you know, meerly becauſe ſhe's grown old, and neither able nor willing to run those lenghts, which poſſibly you may deſire her. If you prefer Nature to her, you'll infallibly loſe what you've got, and entail a ſad Inheritance of monſtrous and deform'd Principles upon your Poſterity; but, if you retain her, you retain your Reaſon, and effectually ſupport the worth and dignity of that excellent Faculty, by ſupplying it with ſuch proper aſſiſtances as it abſolutely ſtands in need of. To prove which, my next Enquiry ſhall be;

SECT. III.

HOW *Reaſon* and *Revelation* ſupport and defend one another, and how little any one Propoſition or Theorem is to be depended upon, where they do not both concur.

" *Reaſon*, ſays Mr. *Locke*, is *natural Re-*
" *velation*, whereby the eternal Father of

" Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge,
" communicates to Mankind that portion of
" Truth which he has laid within the reach
" of their natural Faculties. *Revelation* is
" *natural Reaſon*, enlarg'd by a new ſet of
" Diſcoveries, communicated by God imme-
" diately, which Reaſon vouches the truth
" of, by the teſtimony and proofs it gives
" that they come from God; ſo that he that
" takes away *Reaſon* to make way for *Re-*
" *velation*, puts out the Light of both: and
" does much-what the ſame, as if he wou'd
" perſuade a Man to put out his Eyes, the
" better to receive the remote Light of an
" inviſible Star, by a Teleſcope."

It's equally as difficult, I imagine, to judge of *Revelation* without *Reaſon*, as it is to judge of *Reaſon* without *Revelation*: for how can a Man be ſuppos'd to think of, or reaſon upon, that which he never ſaw nor heard? or how can he judge of that which he hears and ſees, if he has not Capacities and Faculties fit to weigh, conſider and diſtinguiſh the ſeveral Objects convey'd into the Mind by the help of theſe Senſes? Was I to ask my poor illiterate Neighbour, what he thought of the Emperor of *China*, or the Features, Manners and Cuſtoms of the *Chineſe*, he'd immediately imagine the one to be a Prince, and the other his Subjects, becauſe the affinity of the Words, and the known Terms by which I diſtinguiſh them,

wou'd

wou'd give him an Idea of ſome Country ſo govern'd and ſo diſtinguiſh'd. But to be able to ſay any thing of them, to deſcribe to me either the Situation of the Place, the Complection of the People, or the Cuſtoms and Conſtitutions of the Empire, wou'd be as impoſſible for him, as to tell me what the Moon is made of, or whether it is a concave, a convex, or a globular Body. But give him an account of the Country, tell him how and by whom they are govern'd, what their Features and Manners are, and in what reſpects they agree with, or differ from us in their moral, political, or religious Cuſtoms; and his Reaſon then will immediately go to work to judge of them; and he'll readily tell me what his Opinion of them is, and which of the two are, in his Judgment, the moſt deſirable Countries to live in. By ſuch Intimations and Innuendoes as theſe, we come to the uſe of our Reaſon, and by Reaſon we become capable of judging of the Probability or Improbability of any Subject or Object propos'd.

By reading *Roſs's View of all Religions*, *Purchas's Pilgrim*, or any other Account of Religions, Countries or Cuſtoms of People throughout the World, we become capable of judging of them both jointly and ſeverally, and knowing in what reſpects they agree with, or are better or worſe than our own. *Reaſon* then becomes uſeful to us, in

conſidering, comparing and collating one with another, and diſtinguiſhing, as near as we are able, Truth from Error, Barbarous from Civil, Right from Wrong: but if we have never heard nor read, of any Religion or Country beſide our own, if we have not had ſo much as an Intimation that there are ſuch and ſuch Places and Perſuaſions in the World, beſides *England* and the *Church eſtabliſhed*; *Reaſon*, I imagine, wou'd think nothing about it, but content itſelf with that ſtock of Knowledge it has already attain'd to, without attempting to make diſcoveries of things that the Mind has not the leaſt Notion or Idea of.

* It's impoſſible, as has been intimated before, that a Man ſhould think before he has ſome Object, ſome intervening Subject or Accident to think upon. It is by the Senſes that Ideas and Conceptions are convey'd into the Mind; and it is from thence that the ſuperior Faculties receive ſuch Evidences and Informations as is their buſineſs and province to conſider, diſcuſs and judge upon. For this reaſon, no doubt, the aforeſaid judicious Author calls *Reaſon* natural *Revelation*, becauſe Diſcoveries are made, and Informations receiv'd by theſe Channels; but ſuppoſe them ſhut up and obſtructed, imagine the Eyes and Ears unca-

* Vide Sanderſon de Conſc.

pable

pable of performing their proper Office and Duty, as in ſome melancholy Inſtances are to be ſeen; the Mind in ſuch caſes ceaſes to be a Remembrancer, and Reaſon a Judge; and without ſome very extraordinary or miraculous Impulſe, without ſome particular Endowment or Inſtinct, which no human Reaſon can account for; all the Faculties are as indolent and regardleſs, as unactive and torpid, as the moſt ſtupid and ſenſeleſs Animals that are abſolutely depriv'd of them.

When either any real or pretended Diſcovery of the Will of God is made to us, *Reaſon* is of uſe to judge and determine which it is; it lets us ſee the Coherence and Conſiſtency of it, with thoſe Notions and Apprehenſions we have of that divine Being, and wherein it agrees with, or contradicts that Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs, by which he's made known to us. If we are wrong in our Apprehenſions of the Deity, what ſhould ſet us right but *Revelation?* which conveys into the Mind freſh Ideas, oppoſite to, and in ſome reſpects diſtinct from thoſe it had before receiv'd: from whence the rational Faculties give Judgment, which of the two, (whether thoſe we had entertain'd before, or theſe we've juſt now receiv'd) are moſt agreeable to Truth, and moſt conſiſtent with a neceſſary, ſelf-exiſtent Being. In theſe and ſuch like reſpects, *Reaſon* aſſumes

it's

it's proper Office and Buſineſs, and judges of *Revelation*, as *Revelation* on the other hand directs, aſſiſts and employs *Reaſon*. The one is abſolutely impertinent and uſeleſs without the other; and he that will ſubmit to *Reaſon* without *Revelation*, or to *Revelation* without *Reaſon*, puts out the Light of both, as Mr. *Locke* before obſerves, and is liable to admit of the greateſt Abſurdities for plain and uncontroverted Truths.

I wou'd not be underſtood here, as if all *Truths* were to be meaſur'd by the Standard of *human Reaſon*, and nothing admitted, as ſuch, that is not as conſiſtent therewith as this one Maxim, *to do as we'd be done by*. There are ſome *Truths* which we are bound to take upon the Word and Credit of the *Relator*; others, to which our Reaſon is but a ſort of collateral Evidence, and cannot aſcertain the reality of, but by ſome concurring Circumſtances; and others, that are clear and poſitive, and which demand, as it were, an abſolute Concurrence and Aſſent at firſt ſight.

Of the firſt ſort are thoſe which exceed the bounds of human Capacity, and for which we can give no other reaſon, but that we are told ſo. We've reaſon to believe the World had a beginning, but no reaſon, that I know of, cou'd ever ſuggeſt to us that it will have an end. We know that God made all things out of nothing; but

but had we not been told ſo, who wou'd ever have imagin'd it? We know that God is a ſpiritual, incorporeal, and a ſelf-exiſtent Being; but how to reduce thoſe Terms to the Standard of our Capacities, and to make them compatible with human Reaſon, is as impoſſible, as to know of what Compoſition the Stars conſiſt, or what they ſerve for, more than to beſpangle the Heavens, and to afford us a glimmering and imperfect Light. "'Tis a ſaying of *Jamblicus*, as Biſhop *Wilkins* obſerves, that Demonſtrations are not "to be expected in matters concerning God "and divine things: nor is this any greater "prejudice to the certainty of ſuch things, "than it is, that God is inviſible."

Of the ſecond ſort, are the belief of an over-ruling Providence; of the actuating a material Body, by an inviſible and immaterial Soul; and how this Soul differs from that of Brutes, but that we know by obſervation and experience, that they are deſtitute of thoſe rational and intellectual Faculties which we have. As to the reality of the Soul's Operation and Influence, we have not the leaſt doubt; but what it is, how it exiſts, and how it operates, we know nothing of, but by deductions and conſequences; which convince us that ſuch a Being, ſo accompliſh'd, muſt neceſſarily actuate and influence us: but how we came by it, and wherein it differs from Matter, is what we

are

are entirely ignorant of, and muſt be ſo, till we are ſpiritualiz'd our ſelves, and become thoſe very ſimple and individual Beings, of which at preſent we are but ſo in part.

Of much the ſame nature is the belief of another World, and the Rewards and Puniſhments that are reſerv'd for good and bad Men there. Mankind, it's probable, had never ſo much as dreamt of them, had not *Revelation* convey'd ſuch Notions into their Minds, and *Experience* taught them, by ſeveral concurring Circumſtances, that they were both capable of, and liable to, the Happineſs or Miſery of ſuch a State.

We are no more capable of giving, what may be properly call'd, a *rational* account of all neceſſary Truths, than we can tell how, from a *Non-entity*, all created Beings, viſible and inviſible, ſhou'd be produc'd and exiſt. We can no more tell how our *Eyes* become perceptible of Light, and our *Ears* capable of diſtinguiſhing Sounds, than we are able to number the Stars, or to deſcribe the ſeveral purpoſes and uſes they are deſign'd for; and yet to argue that we have neither *Eyes* nor *Ears*, becauſe *Reaſon* cannot acoount for the real cauſes of their reſpective Operations, is much the ſame as to declare againſt our own Exiſtence, and to ſay, there's, in reality, no ſuch Creature as Man in the world, but that all we ſee and know,

know, are the meer effects of Imagination and Fancy only.

Of the third ſort of Truths, there's no need to ſay much. There are certain Propoſitions which will not admit of the leaſt diſpute; every Man readily aſſents to 'em at firſt ſight, and he that does not, is univerſally reputed a downright *Sceptick*, that imagines all he hears and ſees a meer Phantom, of which there can be no abſolute or concluding Evidence, no poſitive Demonſtration or undeniable Proof. But for a Man to argue againſt the truth of any Propoſition, becauſe he cannot account for it from *natural* Reaſon, is much the ſame as to ſay, that his Body is actuated without a Soul, or that there are neither Angels nor Spirits, becauſe he can neither ſee them, nor ſo much as comprehend what kind of Beings they are, nor how they exiſt.

" *According to Reaſon*, ſays Mr. *Locke*, " are ſuch Propoſitions, whoſe Truth we can " diſcover, by examining and tracing thoſe " *Ideas* we have from *Senſation* and *Reflec-* " *tion*, and by natural Deductions know to " be true or probable. *Above Reaſon*, are " ſuch Propoſitions, whoſe Truth or Proba- " bility we cannot by Reaſon derive from " thoſe Principles. *Contrary to Reaſon*, are " ſuch Propoſitions as are inconſiſtent with, " or irreconcileable to our clear and diſtinct " *Ideas*. Thus the Exiſtence of one God is

" according

" according to Reaſon; the Exiſtence of " more than one God, contrary to Reaſon; " the Reſurrection of the Dead above Rea- " ſon."

In the firſt Inſtance, Mankind muſt neceſſarily agree, if the ſame means of Information produce the ſame Conceptions and Ideas, as they rarely fail to do. In the ſecond, no Information or Reflection whatſoever will be able to raiſe any Ideas agreeable to Truth, if the Mind is well diſpoſed, and free from thoſe Prejudices which Cuſtom, Education and Example are apt to leave behind them. And in the third, we do not abandon our Reaſon, but we ſubject it to a ſuperiour Power and Authority; and from a rational Aſſurance that God has reveal'd and made known this or that Truth, we readily yield and aſſent to it, though our weak and faultring Reaſon cannot comprehend it. And why ſhou'd we not? for if in things that we are familiar and converſant with, if in our own Frame and Conſtitution, Reaſon is in the dark, and not able to comprehend the ſeveral Compoſitions of which we conſiſt, it's hardly poſſible for it to account for things of a foreign and diſtant nature, and which are as far remote and ſeparate from matter, as a ſpiritual, inviſible, and a ſelf-exiſtent Being, is from that which is corporeal, mortal, and dependent.

What

What Conceptions, what Notions or Ideas of Spirits, and of the Conſtitution, Order, and Oeconomy of the inviſible World have we, but what are convey'd to us by the help and aſſiſtance of viſible and familiar Objects? When we think of God, what Object have we that better conveys the Idea of him into our Mind, than the *Sun*, which adminiſters to the Propagation, Support and Nouriſhment of this animal and vegetable World, as he does to the whole Univerſe? When we conſider his Angels, or ſubſervient Miniſters, our Imaginations immediately retreat to a Prince's Court, where we ſee a numerous croud of obſequious Attendants, all officiouſly waiting, and diligently executing the Sovereign's Will. This is as far as our ſhallow, finite Conceptions are able to carry us: but if we ſhould attempt to purſue them further, if we ſhould preſume to climb up into Heaven, and ſee the Sovereign Lord of the Univerſe, and his celeſtial Courtiers, and angelical Miniſters, as they are, we're in an inſtant loſt in our enquiries, and know no more how to frame any adequate Conceptions or Ideas of them, than we know how to convey our ſelves thither, clogg'd and incumber'd as we now be. Becauſe therefore our finite Underſtanding cannot comprehend what is infinite and ſpiritual; becauſe we cannot ſound the bottomleſs depth of Eternity, and ſee clearly into all the ſecret

eret Oeconomy of infinite Wiſdom, is it fit for that reaſon that we ſhou'd diſpute the reality of it? And will we preſume to diſapprove and decry Myſteries, when it's very evident that what we know even of our ſelves, and the things about us, bears no proportion, is in no reſpect equal, to what we are ignorant of, and muſt neceſſarily be ſo while we are in this glimmering, and imperfect State?

"It's a pleaſant Story, ſays the Author "of the *Tattler*, that we, forſooth, who are "the only imperfect Creatures in the Uni- "verſe, are the only Beings that will not "allow of Imperfection. Somebody has ta- "ken notice that we ſtand in the middle "of Exiſtences, and are by this one Circum- "ſtance, the moſt unhappy of all others. "The Brutes are guided by Inſtinct, and "know no Sorrow; the Angels have Know- "ledge, and are happy; but Men are go- "vern'd by Opinion, which is, I know not "what Mixture of Inſtinct and Knowledge, "and are neither indolent nor happy. It's "very obſervable that Criticks are a Peo- "ple between the learned and ignorant, and "by that Situation enjoy the Tranquility of "neither. As Criticks ſtand among Men, ſo "do Men in general between Angels and "Brutes." That is, the Knowledge they have or are capable of attaining to, is ſuperiour to the one, but too much confin'd and limited,

limited, too imperfect and obſcure, to equal the other.

That there are Myſteries in Religion, is no more to be wonder'd at, than that there ſhould be ſuch in Nature; begin at home, and make *theſe* familiar, and it's very poſſible we may either explain or diſapprove the *other:* but till we can do that, we ought by no means to think it ſtrange that our *Underſtandings* are at a *non-plus*; but ſhould rather be thankful that God is pleas'd to interpoſe his Authority, that we may thereby learn to recede from our own Self-ſufficiency, and be taught to adore that infinite and incomprehenſible Wiſdom, whoſe *Judgments are unſearchable, and whoſe Ways are paſt finding out.*

It would be eaſy here to demonſtrate the abſurdity of ſetting up human *Reaſon* in oppoſition to *Revelation*, and pretending to ſee by that dim Light, what God, for wiſe and good ends, has placed beyond the limits of our finite Capacities. But this is what I am not indiſpenſibly oblig'd to do, nor does the Subject, at preſent under conſideration, abſolutely require it: for if human *Reaſon* is lame and imperfect without *Revelation*, if it is not capable of attaining to any competent Knowledge of Religion and Duty but by this Channel, (as has been before prov'd) it neceſſarily follows that it's to this method of Information and Intelligence that the Fa-

culty owes its progreſs and improvement, and that it would be impoſſible for any Man to reaſon himſelf into a belief that he's a *Creature*, if he had never been told of a *Creator*, nor receiv'd any hint or information of a ſuperior Being to whom he ow'd his exiſtence.

How can any Man be ſuppos'd to judge between Object and Object, Opinion and Opinion, unleſs he ſees and knows both the one and the other, and is in ſome meaſure acquainted with their reſpective worth or demerit? and on the other hand, how can theſe be known and diſtinguiſh'd but by the help and aſſiſtance of the rational Faculties, which determine according to that light and information they have already receiv'd, and not according to that which they never have had, and probably never may have any intelligence of. "Oculi corporis, *ſays one* *, figurarum "& colorum conſtituti ſunt judices: qui ſi "valeant tum demum recte & integerrime "judicandi munere funguntur: ſi vero ſint "imbecillius affecti, a vera ratione aberrantes, "nec aſſecuti rerum decentiam, objecta ſibi "recti ſpecie vehementer læduntur, ut vel "prorſus non videant, vel alia pro aliis cer-"nentes, eorum, quæ ſub aſpectum cadant, "naturam perperam diſcernant. Animi au-"tem pars illa, in qua ineſt videndi vis, "quæque oculis ipſis hanc eandem ſubmi-"niſtrat,

* J. Bapt. Gab. Argumentum.

"niſtrat, alteram quoque accepit ab opifice "facultatem, qua non figurarum modo, & "colorum vaporumque & guſtus, atque alio- "rum hujuſcemodi qualitates dijudicat, ſed "etiam rationes & orationes perpendens, "impias a piis diſtinguit, divinarumque & "humanarum diſcrimen agnoſcit. Unum- "quodque horum cum recte affecta eſt, & "ab incredulitate ſoluta ac libera, diſcernit. "At ubi talis & offuſa eſt caligo, idem quod "oculi corporis, ipſa ſuſtinet, & alia pro "aliis intuetur, vel perturbatione ſuperante "victa nihil omnino videt." As if he had ſaid, It is juſt with the Faculty of Reaſon as it is with the Eyes, they cannot judge of Objects till all intervening impediments and obſtructions are firſt removed; no more can Reaſon: for if it labours under any prejudice, any miſinformation or wrong intelligence, it's either a *uſeleſs* or a *falſe* Guide, and no more able to diſtinguiſh Truth from Error, Right from Wrong, than the Eye can diſcern Objects in the dark, or diſtinguiſh Colours it has never ſeen. Was ever a juſt and upright Judge known to give Sentence till he had firſt heard and examin'd the Evidence? or was ever any Evidence reputed good and authentick, till it was firſt receiv'd and approv'd by a proper Magiſtrate or Judge? Is any Object properly to be reputed ſuch, till the Eye has diſcern'd it? And when it is diſcern'd, does not the Mind immediately

go to work to judge whether it is really the ſame which at firſt ſight it appear'd to be? What Propoſition was ever yet admitted that was univerſally reputed contrary to Reaſon, or what Reaſon could ever be render'd for a Propoſition till the purport and intent of it was firſt conſider'd, and the drift and aim thereof deliberately diſcuſs'd? A Man that had never ſeen nor heard of a *Fleet of Ships*, would as ſoon imagine them to be a *floating Iſland* as a *Flock of Wild-geeſe*, or *vice verſa*, if no Ideas of either had been before convey'd into his Mind; but when the uſe and intent of them is deſcrib'd to him, when he ſees them on ſhore, and obſerves the *Materials* of which they are made, and the *Cargo* with which they are loaded, his Reaſon then points out to him, that they are not what he at firſt took 'em to be, but a ſort of *Machines* contriv'd on purpoſe to convey Men and Goods from one Country to another, which the Sea has ſeparated and diſjoin'd.

Reaſon cannot with any Propriety be reputed ſuch, till ſome Subject is propoſed, ſome Object intervenes, for it to diſcuſs, conſider, and ruminate upon. Was it ever known to intermeddle with that of which it never had any intelligence or notice? or, on the other hand, did it ever receive any ſuch intelligence, but it immediately went to work to judge of it? If *Revelation* was not hereby

to be tried and examin'd, *Mahomet* might paſs for as good a Law-giver as *Moſes*; and if this did not aſſiſt, inform, and direct *Reaſon*, Fancy and Opinion would paſs for good Reaſon, and no Man would be able to diſtinguiſh whether this or that was the more eligible *.

It was the *Revelation* of the Goſpel (let the *Deiſts* ſay what they will) that ſet Mankind right in their Notions as to what concern'd both Knowledge and Practice; it was this, and none other, that expell'd thoſe innumerable multitudes of ſuppoſititious *Deities* out of the World, and brought the generality of People to believe in, and acknowledge one ſupreme, independent, and eternal Being only. It was this, together with the ſeveral Diſperſions and Captivities of the *Jews* both before and ſince, that turn'd Mankind from dumb Idols, and convinc'd them that there could be but one living and true God; and from hence, I'll venture to ſay, even the *Jews* themſelves are preſerv'd from that propenſity and inclination to Idolatry which their Fore-fathers (and they cannot deny it) were ſo frequently and juſtly charged with. By the help and information of this one Syſtem, human Reaſon receiv'd ſeveral Advantages and Improvements; and conſidering how lame and imperfect it was before, and how it ſtands now, the greateſt Enemy that Chri-

* Vide *Taylor*'s Duct. Dubitant. &c.

ſtianity has, cannot aſcribe it to any other Cauſe. But yet to ſhew that the great Author and Inſtrument of this Diſpenſation had no deſign to draw Men into an implicit Credulity of his Doctrine; to let them ſee that they ought not inconſiderately to give into any *Revelation*, without weighing and conſidering the *Reaſons* upon which it is recommended; he frequently appeals to their Underſtanding and Judgment, with reſpect both to the *Doctrine* he taught, and the *Miracles* he wrought, and refers them to his *Works* for Information and Conviction; whether what he ſaid and did in diſcharge of his prophetick Office, came from God, from himſelf, or a diabolical Power.

In referring them to his Miracles, he directly appeal'd to their Underſtanding and Reaſon. It was by this that he'd have them try and examine that *Revelation* of the divine Will which he then propos'd to 'em, and from thence make a Judgment of that Commiſſion and Authority under which he profeſs'd to act. Was not this the way to convince Mankind that he had no deſign to delude or impoſe upon them? Could there any more effectual Methods be taken to recommend both his Perſon and Doctrine to the eſteem and veneration of Men, than thoſe which he made uſe of, and referr'd them frequently to? And did not the World evidently ſtand in need of ſuch Methods of

Information and Conviction, in order to rectify thoſe miſapprehenſions of God and their Duty to him, which they had univerſally receiv'd and entertain'd?

If my Lord ——— makes me his Steward, and ſends me into the Country to tranſact and take care of his Affairs there, what better proof can I give to his Vaſſals and Tenants that I really have his Commiſſion, than by producing his Signet, giving account of every Man's Rents and Arrears, and locking and unlocking the ſeveral Chambers, Cloſets, and Cabinets of his Country-ſeat? This may ſerve to convince them, that I am what I profeſs, and my Commiſſion ſhews me, to be; but then, when they obſerve me faithfully and diligently purſuing the Truſt repoſed in me, and entirely attach'd to the Intereſt of my Lord by a prudent and frugal Management of his Affairs; when they ſee me ſteadily and conſtantly adhering to my Profeſſion, and not digreſſing, in any one Inſtance, from that Care and Fidelity, which becomes an honeſt and upright Steward: if in the tranſacting and managing his Concerns, I am not only obſerv'd to recede from all ſelfiſh and ſiniſter Ends of my own, but to conſult the thriving and proſperity of all his Tenants: if I preſcribe Rules of Oeconomy and Good-husbandry to 'em, and let them ſee how to proſecute and carry on their reſpective Intereſts to the beſt advantage;

and, in a word, if after a few Years experience, it's manifeſt to all, that my Lord's Eſtate is conſiderably improv'd, his Tenants enrich'd, and that there is ſtill a farther proſpect of Increaſe and Advancement on both ſides; what room can there then be to queſtion mine Authority any more than my Honeſty? or how can I be liable to any invidious Epithets and Characters, who have given ſuch manifeſt Proofs of a prudent and upright Adminiſtration in the Truſt repos'd in me?

I've hitherto ſpoke of *Revelation*, only in general terms, and I deſignedly did ſo, the better to ſhew how Mankind came by that Information and Knowledge, which in ſeveral Ages, and ſeveral Places in the World, they have appear'd to be poſſeſs'd of. A Man muſt have better Eyes than I pretend to, that can ſee *Nature*, or even any *Delineations* of it, in any one part of Religion or Duty profeſs'd and practiſed throughout the World, unleſs it be in ſuch inſtances, as Men now-a-days are either aſham'd or afraid to patronize. If ever any ſuch Principles were imprinted in *Nature*, *Chriſtianity*, I'm perſuaded, has brought them to light; but whether this *Syſtem* is *as old as the Creation*; whether it is the ſame in all or moſt material parts of Knowledge and Duty, as hath been profeſs'd and practiſed throughout the World ever ſince the *Creation*; whether there

there is no conſiderable difference between the Religion of *Chriſtians* and that of the old *Greeks* and *Romans*; is a queſtion that in mine opinion is abſolutely neceſſary to be anſwer'd, before the Notion of *Natural Religion* can be effectually eſtabliſh'd, or wiſe and reaſonable Men induced to think that it ſurviv'd the firſt Man. But this is not my province. As I've before advanced, that all *Religion*, right or wrong, is owing to *Revelation*, and that, as it appears to me, Men could have known nothing of it but by ſome external Methods, or Means of Information; ſo now I'll wind up the whole with ſome Reflections on that particular *Revelation* call'd the *Goſpel:* wherein I'll attempt to prove from the Evidence of *human Reaſon*, that all the Knowledge that the *Deiſts* pretend to, or can, with a good face, boaſt of, is owing to this *Syſtem*, and this only.

SECT. IV.

THIS, I confeſs, is a bold Undertaking, becauſe I do not in all reſpects know what their Principles are, nor wherein they differ from thoſe that Chriſtianity has taught and recommended. But I'm inclin'd to think that theſe will not ſtand much in my way, becauſe

becauſe I'll charitably ſuppoſe that to live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly,* are neither diſſonant with their Opinions nor Practice; but that what is *morally* good, or *morally* evil, is the ſame in their *Law of Nature* as it is in our *Goſpel.*

When they talk of following *Nature,* I hope they mean *right Reaſon*; and as that implies a *Reaſon* which is *wrong,* I take it for granted, that *Nature* points out to 'em which is which, or elſe ſhe's the Parent of Licentiouſneſs and Miſrule, and a very blind and imperfect Guide in every part of Duty whatſoever.

Now upon this ſuppoſition, that their Principles are to live ſo and ſo, and that *right Reaſon* is their Guide and Director in the proſecution of theſe Principles; then I deſire to know what Rule or Standard they have to meaſure this Reaſon by? or how they'll do to bring all Men to be of one Mind in this particular, *viz.* What is *right Reaſon,* and *what is not?* If they ſay, that this is a Point that has always been clear and uncontroverted, every Age, and almoſt every Inſtance of Life, proves the contrary. If they alledge, that all the great Law-givers in different Countries and different Periods of time, have all agreed in their Sentiments of moral Duties, and have all evidently diſtinguiſh'd *Right* from *Wrong,* then they muſt prove that this Harmony was the reſult of

natural

natural Inſtinct, and that they had no Knowledge nor Intimation what one had done, or was doing, while another was at work upon the ſame ſubject. But the one allegation deſtroys and confounds the other; for if Men are not equally capable of thinking and judging alike, it's impoſſible they ſhould act alike; if the different Actions of Men may be allow'd, or ſuppos'd, to be the neceſſary Reſult of their different Sentiments, *Right* and *Wrong*, it's very certain, are not diſtinguiſhable by any inſtinct or endowment of Nature; for then, as has been before urg'd, Men would all *walk by the ſame rule, mind the ſame thing*; which it's very evident they have never done, and very probable never will do, without ſome eſtabliſh'd Rule or Law univerſally agreed upon and ſubmitted to. But what can this be? not the *Law of Nature*, for that plainly is much the ſame in Men as in Brutes, till it's directed and inform'd. Not the *Laws of Nations*, for then what is found to be *right* in one Country, will appear to be *wrong* in another; and it would be impoſſible to determine by any ſuch Rule which is which. Not the *Laws of that particular Nation* wherein a Man lives; for if he's acquainted with any other; if he knows what they do, and how they live elſewhere, he'll be apt to think himſelf hardly dealt with, not to be ſuffer'd to follow that which he thinks moſt

juſt

juſt and reaſonable, and moſt agreeable to ſtrict truth.

In order therefore to have a Law or Rule of moral Duties, which Mankind ſhall univerſally agree upon and aſſent to; a Law, which in all reſpects anſwers the beſt conceptions we are capable of entertaining of God, preſcribes the moſt rational Rules of holy Living and harmleſs Converſation, and conſults the Happineſs and Proſperity of all Ranks and Degrees of Men: if, I ſay, there ever was, or can be ſuppoſed to be one general Syſtem of Religion or Duty publiſh'd in the World, which tends to promote true and ſubſtantial Piety towards God, and Temperance and Sobriety, Juſtice and Charity among Men, where ſhall we find it, but in the Chriſtian Scheme, or Rule of Duty preſcrib'd in the Goſpel? which contains in it θαυμαστὰ καὶ μεγάλα, as an Enemy acknowledges *; that is to ſay, *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, whatſoever things are virtuous and praiſeworthy.*

If the Deiſts propoſe to themſelves any Rules of Living contrary to this Scheme, their own Experience, and unprejudiced Reaſon, (if they are Maſters of any ſuch) will tell

* Trypho.

tell them they are in the wrong: if they know of any that are more conducible to all the ends and purpoſes of holy Living, and inoffenſive Converſation, they'd do well to publiſh and declare them. But I'll venture to ſay, that it's from hence (if their views are juſt and honourable) that all their Notions of Religion and Duty are borrow'd, and that they would not ſo much as know there is a God, that is to ſay, an infinite, eternal, and neceſſary Eſſence, that has all Perfections in and of himſelf, had not Chriſtianity told them ſo. By Chriſtianity, I mean, in this place, the *Bible*, or that *Revelation* of the Being, Attributes, and Will of God, which is contain'd in the Old and New Teſtament: and unleſs they can produce ſome Syſtem of moral Philoſophy, ſome general Preſcript of Knowledge and Duty, *prior* to, and abſolutely *independent* on this; unleſs they can make it appear that all the World had as clear conceptions of theſe things, as the *Jews* themſelves had, and that Chriſtianity has made no improvements in them, they muſt be content, nay forced to own, that it is to this Diſpenſation they are indebted for what they do know more than their Ante-chriſtian Forefathers did, and that without it, it's abſolutely impoſſible that they could be any wiſer in theſe points than they were.

" It

" It would provoke and grieve one, ſays " *Cæcilius* in *Minucius Fælix*, to hear a " parcel of ignorant, illiterate and ſordid " People pretend to that certainty of Know- " ledge in the ſupreme Cauſe of all things, " about which the profoundeſt Philoſophers " of all Ages and all Sects are deliberating " and beating their brains to this day." And yet this is the Philoſophy that our modern *Rationaliſts* are advancing in their new Scheme, and labouring to bring Men to, tho' it's as far ſhort of their preſent Attainments, as theſe are to that, which they are endeavouring to explode.

What, I beſeech you, makes the difference between the Philoſophy that now is, and that which was then; what has advanced and improved Men's Knowledge in all parts of Duty, to an higher degree of Perfection than ever it was before; what makes even the *Deiſts* themſelves merit that very Character and Denomination which diſtinguiſheth them from all or moſt of the *Philoſophers* and *Magi* of former times, but this Diſpenſation? which is juſtly call'd by one *, *veram & cæleſtem Philoſophiam*, becauſe it makes Men *wiſe unto Salvation*, by diſpoſing and directing them how to demean themſelves ſuitably to the good Will and Pleaſure of God in every ſtate and condition of Life whatſoever.

If

* Vide Elmenhorſt in M. F.

If the *Deiſts* have this Knowledge and theſe Diſpoſitions, as is to be hoped they have, they would do well to let the World know how they came by them, from whence they had them, and in what reſpects they differ from thoſe which Chriſtianity inſpires Men with. If they are the ſame; *Nature*, it's very certain, did not ſuggeſt them, becauſe then they'd been known to the World long before: if they are not the ſame; then they'd do well to ſhew the difference, and let us ſee in what particulars theirs is a more rational Syſtem, than this is. But I'm inclin'd to think that either they muſt relax and enervate the moral Duties of Chriſtianity, and make them more compliable to the deprav'd Appetite, or they muſt neceſſarily be the ſame. If this is their view, then it will eaſily appear which of the two are the beſt Moraliſts, and moſt ſafe to copy after; but if not, then they muſt own, and they cannot help it, that this their Stock of *Reaſon* is owing to the *Chriſtian Diſpenſation*, and that this generous Adverſary has furniſh'd them with thoſe very Weapons, they now ungratefully turn againſt it.

If it be objected, that their being brought up in a Chriſtian Country, and educated in Chriſtian Principles, is an Argument that their Notions and Opinions cannot ariſe from that quarter, but muſt neceſſarily proceed

from

from their own *unprejudiced* Obſervation and Experience; I anſwer,

1. That a Man may acquire a conſiderable competency of human Learning, without any great ſhare of, or any regard to, *Chriſtian* Education; and may both ſee and be taught every day what he ought to do, and yet follow his own ſelfiſh Humour, and head-ſtrong Paſſions for all that.

2. Some Men affect a kind of ſingularity both in Opinion and Practice from all the World beſide, and are ambitious of being thought *wiſer than their Teachers*, merely to be taken notice of and gaz'd at.

3. It often happens that antiquated Opinions and uncontroverted Axioms, that have been univerſally receiv'd and long in uſe, meet at laſt with the ſame treatment that uſually befalls old-faſhion'd Furniture; they are thrown out of doors, deſpis'd and neglected, to make way for ſomething more modiſh and agreeable, and which better pleaſes the fantaſtical Eye of human Paſſions, that are always affecting varieties, rather than that which Cuſtom and Familiarity has made cheap.

I'll not ſay that good Principles are ſometimes made to yield and give way to bad Practices, or becauſe ſome Men are inclin'd to live as they liſt, that therefore they chuſe and are reſolv'd to believe accordingly. It's certainly a great aggravation of guilt and demerit to *rencontre* with, and act contrary to,

to, a known Duty; and if Men can bring themſelves to be wicked upon Principle, or to follow the Dictates of depraved Nature, upon a ſuppoſition that there is no expreſs Law or Rule to direct them otherwiſe, they may then go ſmoothly on to the broad Path, without being in the leaſt concern'd whither it leads them, or what will be the conſequence of ſuch a Conduct. If I ſhould ſay, that it's with this view that the *Deiſts* ſet themſelves to confront and oppoſe Chriſtianity, I may probably aſſert more than I can prove: but if Men of ſuch Principles are ſeldom obſerv'd to be very conſcientious Practitioners even of what they call *natural* or moral Duties; if there appears in their Lives or Actions a general neglect or diſregard of all religious Duties, even ſuch as are the neceſſary Effects of the Belief of a God: if a common inclination or propenſity to *follow Nature*, has apparently introduced a melancholy Scene of all kind of diſſolute and immoral Practices; and if Men of this Complexion are ſeldom known to deny *Nature*, (that is, their Paſſions and Appetites) what ſhe calls for or requires of them: then I doubt it will appear that they have no intent to make any improvements in moral Duties by this their new Scheme; but on the other hand, to relax and enervate all Obligations of Obedience whatſoever, in order to make way for this their darling *Religion*

ligion of Nature; which, take away Revelation, may eaſily be made to countenance, as it has before done, any whimſical Caprice or Humour that Men ſhall take in their heads.

Education is but a means of Information and Improvement, and when diſcharged in the moſt ſtrict and conſcientious manner, is often forced to give way to the uncontrolable violence of Men's unruly Paſſions; but when it's neglected, or entirely ſet aſide, and no part of Duty inculcated and recommended, but what occurs in the curſory reading of Claſſick Authors; when heathen Morality ſhall upon all Occaſions be applauded and cry'd up, but Chriſtian Duties very little, if at all regarded; when Men ſhall bend all their thoughts and ſtudy to obtain and recommend human Learning, but take very little pains, beſtow very little labour, have very little regard to attain to the Knowledge and Practice of that which is Divine, and which alone can *make them wiſe unto Salvation:* there's no great fear that *Education* will much prejudice them in favour of the Chriſtian Religion, any more than it will do of Heatheniſm. But if they are diſpoſed to diſtinguiſh themſelves, may be a means to make them admir'd and gaz'd at for their *ſingular* Abilities, and *ſingular* Diſcoveries, ſo much above the common Capacities of other Men. But to return:

If

If the generality of Mankind, ſince the promulgation of Chriſtianity, know more of God and their Duty to him, than they did before; if moral Virtues are advanced to a higher pitch of Excellency and Perfection, than the wiſeſt of Men in the heathen World were able to attain to; if Truths of real Concern, and abſolutely neceſſary to be known, are now receiv'd and entertain'd, which before were not ſo much as thought of; and if Mankind are unanimous in the Belief of ſeveral important Articles which before they were doubtful of, and divided in: I'd be glad to know from what Source this Knowledge, this Perfection, this Unanimity ſprung, if not from the Goſpel; and how it comes to paſs, that we do not hear of that variety of ridiculous Deities, thoſe monſtrous Opinions and Tenets, this claſhing and interfering of Notions and Sentiments about Truths of the higheſt concern, which before ſo univerſally prevail'd. Have Mankind learn'd more in ſeventeen hundred Years, than ever they were able to do before in four thouſand; and is Chriſtianity to be excluded from having a hand in this Improvement? Are they more wiſe and knowing in every part almoſt both of ſpeculative and practical Divinity, than the greateſt Philoſophers were ever able to attain to; and are theſe Improvements the genuine Reſult of natural Reaſon and Conſideration only? Strange! to ſee the World

almoſt univerſally diſintangled from the moſt ſtupid Ignorance, the moſt extravagant Conceptions, the moſt wild and incoherent Notions of God and their Duty, that was poſſible (I had almoſt ſaid impoſſible) for the moſt ſenſual and carnal Mind to receive and entertain; and all this within the ſpace of two thouſand Years, and without the help of any viſible Information, except the Goſpel: and yet this not to be allow'd to have any title to, or ſhare in it. Surely Mankind had the ſame Faculties before, that they have had ſince; the ſame Capacities to ſee, conſider, and reflect on the ſtupendous Works of God in the viſible World, that they have now; and yet they were never able to draw any proper Deductions from them; never able to ſee through and diſcern that inviſible and almighty Hand that gave them a Being, and placed them there for that purpoſe. What, I beſeech you, could this ariſe from, but want of ſome proper Hint or Information what they were, and the Ends and Purpoſes they were ordain'd for? How came it to paſs that natural Philoſophy could not teach Men the right Uſe of natural Reaſon; that is, to bring them to the Knowledge of God and their Duty, without which all other Acquirements are trifling and vain? It's very certain, that the World was bewilder'd in a maze of Intricacies and Difficulties in relation to theſe grand Points, till this *Day-Star* appear'd

pear'd on the Horizon; and I believe we may venture to ſay, that they had to this day been *feeling after* them; or, in other words, *ever learning*, and *never able* to come at the Knowledge of them, had not this Diſpenſation *open'd their Eyes*, and diſpers'd thoſe thick Clouds which obſtructed their Proſpect, and kept them in the dark, as to theſe Points, notwithſtanding all their *curious Arts*.

"The Art of cultivating Man, ſays one *, "till Chriſt perfected it, labour'd under a "twofold defect, which fruſtrated its in-"tendment.

"1. It was inſufficient in point of the "Syſtem, it comprehended not all the Pre-"cepts and Expedients of a truly virtuous "and perfectly honeſt Heart and Life. The "Rule came ſhort of the End pretended, "which was to reduce Man into a Confor-"mity with God. And,

"2. It was inſufficient in point of Power "and Operativeneſs: their Precepts were ſo "ſinewleſs, that they had no ſtrength to "draw even their Teachers into a compliance "with them, but left them as much Slaves "to Anger, Covetouſneſs, Luſt, *&c.* as they "were before." "Moſt of their Cures of "natural Pravity, ſays he, were but pallia-"tions, ſuch as *Lucian* and the Satyriſts "laugh'd at; and the reſt were but partial,

* *Smith's* Appeal, lib. 4.

" amounting to no more than the lopping off " of ſome Branches of the corrupt Tree, and " grafting in their room ſome particular Vir- " tues." " Thoſe that were confeſſedly " good, were neither commended to Mens " Conſciences as the Dictates of God, nor " preſs'd with ſuch Motives of eternal Re- " tribution as the Goſpel propounds, nor ſe- " conded with that Aid of divine Grace which " was apparently manifeſt in the preaching " of the Word of Life." " *Thales*, one of " the ſeven wiſe Men, could not ſatisfy " *Cræſus*, when he ask'd him, what God " was; whereas every mechanick Chriſtian " has found and can anſwer every Queſtion " that can be ask'd concerning him. *Socra-* " *tes*, whom the Oracle declar'd to be the " beſt and wiſeſt of Men, was accuſed of " Sodomy, but Chriſtianity forbids the having " to do with any but a Man's own Wife. " *Democritus* put out his Eyes to keep " himſelf continent, but a good Chriſtian " can look on a Woman without danger of " Sin. *Diogenes*, for all his pretence to " Humility, trampled on *Plato*'s Pride with " greater Pride; but Chriſtianity inſults not " the pooreſt Man. *Lycurgus* pined himſelf " to death, becauſe the *Lacedemonians* would " have corrected his Laws; but a good Chri- " ſtian is glad to be told of his Faults, and " thinks it no diſparagement to have his Er- " rors ſeen and corrected by others."

To

To attack Chriſtianity at this diſtance from its primitive Purity and Perfection, is much like taking an ingenuous Adverſary at a diſadvantage, when Sickneſs or ſome bodily Infirmity has weaken'd and render'd him uncapable of making a proper Defence. Its Laws, thank God, we have, and the Excellency of them above all other Syſtems of Duty that ever appear'd in the World, are manifeſt Indications of their divine Original; but their Beauty and Luſtre is, no doubt, greatly impair'd for want of putting them in execution, and we ſee but *through a Glaſs darkly* thoſe ſurprizing Qualifications and Accompliſhments of a Chriſtian Life, which the firſt Converts to that holy Religion made plain and manifeſt in every point of Duty whatſoever. But this was always the *Heretick's* and *Infidel's Hour and Power of Darkneſs*. The Enemy ſows his Tares while Men ſleep: and thoſe very Dogs that durſt not open their Mouths when Chriſtianity walk'd triumphantly in the midſt of its moſt implacable and inveterate Adverſaries, ſtand now barking at every door to ſee it ſtript of all that primitive Innocency and Purity, which was the Honour and Ornament, the Joy and Crown of rejoicing of its firſt and beſt Advocates. We are as much to ſeek for a good Chriſtian now, as *Tully* was for a good Man of the Philoſophers making. What one is ſo well manner'd, ſo diſpos'd in

Mind as his Religion requires? Who ſees a good Chriſtian now outſtrip or excel even a ſober Heathen in the times of the Apoſtles? It's no wonder if this Holy Religion has many Enemies abroad, that can produce ſo few ſincere and faithful Friends at home. An Enemy will be ſure to make the Attack when and where the Fortification is weakleſt guarded; and as we have ſeen Chriſtianity abſolutely diſcarded and turn'd out of doors where ſhe firſt vouchſafed her benign Influence and Favour, ſo we may ſee her plainly preparing to take her leave of us, that we may follow that darling *Religion of Nature*, that indulgent Parent of all Licentiouſneſs, which gives Men liberty to live as they liſt.

We ſee what Men are under the beſt Laws and the beſt Rules of holy Living that ever the World was oblig'd with: What are we to expect when they have none but the whimſical Suggeſtions of their own corrupt Paſſions, and can know nothing, have no Rules of Converſation and Conduct, but what the *Laws of Society* preſcribe and appoint? Theſe Laws, I own, are of great uſe to keep up a proper *Decorum* and Regularity among Men, and without which no Confederacy or Correſpondence could poſſibly be maintain'd and ſupported; but will any Man ſay that theſe are the Laws of Nature? Can it be ſuppoſed that human Reaſon, abſtracted from *Revelation*, or ſome ſuch means of Information

mation or Direction, teaches and ſuggeſts them? then I'll affirm that all the Accounts we have of Mankind before the promulgation of Chriſtianity are Farce and Fable, and that they had as good Notions both of God and their Duty, as ever, and purſued as *rational Schemes* of Piety, Sobriety, and Juſtice, as they do now.

What I mean by *rational Schemes*, are ſuch Rules of holy Living and inoffenſive Converſation as are allow'd of, and cannot be otherwiſe, by all Men, in all Ages and Places of the World: for what was a Law of Nature at firſt, muſt neceſſarily be the ſame ſtill, and abſolutely unalterable. If Men therefore under the information of *Philoſophy* and heathen *Theology*, retain'd theſe Principles, had theſe Notions and Apprehenſions that they have now; then it's very certain that they are injur'd, and we are impoſed upon by thoſe accounts which are tranſmitted down to us both of their moral and religious Sentiments. But if they were the ſame as they are repreſented; if they were as wild and extravagant both in Principle and Practice as they appear to have been; I wonder whether the *Deiſts* will come into their way of thinking and acting, and ſo prove that to be the moſt *rational Scheme* which they follow'd; or will aſcribe their Improvements to ſome inward Impulſe or exterior Cauſe, from whence it may appear that

that theſe were in the wrong, and they in the right.

If they give into their Scheme, they muſt neceſſarily adopt all their Gods, comply with all their Sacrifices, and conform to all their moral Rules of Duty, which put all together, will not fail to deck out *Nature* in her primitive Dreſs. If they ſay that their preſent Notions are the Reſult of ſome inward and ſecret Impulſe, their Works will beſt ſhew the Power and Goodneſs of their Author; and to oblige us with a *Body of Divinity*, will ſoon convince us who he is: but if they aſcribe their preſent Acquiſitions and Improvements to ſome exteriour Cauſe; if they allow that ſome diſcovery of Knowledge and Duty has been made to the World, which the Heathens knew nothing of; then they muſt either tell us what it is, and by whom it was made; or give us leave to tell them, that it can be nothing elſe but the Chriſtian Diſpenſation which has communicated more Knowledge, recommended better Rules of Duty, and taught more elevated Syſtems of Virtue and Piety, than all the Volumes of heathen Philoſophy and Oratory put together.

Can we imagine that the ſeveral Captivities of the *Jews* had no other tendency but to puniſh them for their frequent Rebellions and Apoſtacies? Yes ſurely; divine Providence had other views in theſe Inflictions; and

and what ſhould theſe be, but to bring the reſt of the World to a better Mind by the Influence of their Example, and to teach them that Knowledge both of God and Nature, which was no where in the World to be learn'd but from the Writings of *Moſes* only? What did *Ptolemy* tranſlate the Old Teſtament into the *Greek* Tongue for, but that other Nations might alſo reap the Benefit of that excellent Diſpenſation, and thereby be made wiſer and better than they were, or could be, before? The firſt *Grecian* Theologiſts, *Pherecydes*, *Pythagoras*, and *Thales*, are ſaid to be the Scholars of the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, and *Hebrews*; and to uſe the Words of the fore-mention'd Author *, the Swarm that hived in *Plato*'s Mouth, came from *Mount Carmel*, and was a Caſt of the School of the Prophets there.

The World was ſome time acquainted with the Writings of *Moſes* and the *Prophets* by the help of the *Septuagint*, before Chriſtianity appear'd upon the Stage; by this means it was eaſy to ſee what they were deſign'd to prepare the way for: and being thus provided with proper Evidence, and of very long ſtanding, in defence of this Diſpenſation, they were put into a Capacity of trying and judging what it was, and from whence it came.

* Lib. 1. Cap. 6.

People

People were every day leaving their Idolatry, and coming over to the *Jewiſh* Religion before the Light of the Goſpel ſhin'd in the World; what could this be owing to, but the Diſpenſation of the *Jews*, and the uſe of this *Septuagint*? by the means of which, every body ſaw into the Abſurdity of their former Lives, and how inconſiſtent their Principles and Practices were, with thoſe of this *particular* Syſtem and *theſe* People. The *Jews* at *Beræa* are particularly commended by St. *Luke* for ſearching the Scriptures, to know whether St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, that he then preach'd among them, agreed therewith, or not; and what were theſe Scriptures but the *Septuagint*, which was the only Language that the generality of them were then acquainted with?

From this particular Privilege, there is reaſon to believe that the *Macedonians* had all imaginable Opportunities of being converſant in this Book as well as they. And what then, I beſeech you, could hinder Chriſtianity from making ſo ſpeedy a Progreſs, when it was uſher'd in by ſo divine a Harbinger, and this Harbinger ſo well qualified to make its way through the thickeſt Crouds, and ſtrongeſt Oppoſitions of heathen Theologiſts? From hence it's probable, not to ſay plain, that thoſe Scriptures of *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, to which the *Apoſtles* ſo frequently appeal'd, were known to the World

ſome

ſome hundreds of Years before their Time; and therefore they that wou'd give themſelves the trouble to examine them carefully, might eaſily find both what they pointed at, and what Improvements would be made in them at the coming of the *Meſſiah.*

It was abſolutely impoſſible that Mankind cou'd be impos'd upon, that had ſuch fair Warning, and underwent ſuch gradual Improvements before they cou'd attain to that Perfection of Knowledge and Virtue, which Chriſtianity was deſign'd to advance them to. It's eaſy to know what they believ'd, and how they liv'd, before *Jews* and *Gentiles* became, as it were, one People; and *Moſes*'s Laws, by the help of a Tranſlation, as well known in *Greece* as in *Judea.* What gave the heathen World a dawn of this Day-Star, but this Converſation, this Information? who had ever thought of a God made without Hands, had he not hereby been convinc'd that he cou'd not poſſibly be ſo, that was made with Hands? *Cæcilius* in *Minucius Felix* ſpeaks the Sentiments of all the World beſides, when he ſays, that the *Jews alone, a miſerable and wretched People, worſhip'd one God only, whoſe Power was ſo inſignificant, whoſe Strength ſo weak, that he himſelf, with his whole Nation, were become captive Slaves to the* Roman *Deities.*

And

And again, *What Monſters, what Prodigies do theſe Chriſtians talk of,* in pretending *that this their God, whom they can neither ſhew, nor ſee, knows and obſerves the Manners, Actions, Words, and even the moſt ſecret Thoughts of all Mankind?* This was the Religion; theſe were the Notions that Mankind in general had, before they were acquainted with the *Jews* and *Moſes*'s Laws: compare one with the other, and that again with Chriſtianity. Conſider, I ſay, how far *Judaiſm* excell'd *Heatheniſm*, and in what reſpects *Chriſtianity* has outſtript both; and then ſee whether it is not to this very *Syſtem* that Men are indebted for that ſuperiour Knowledge they are at preſent Maſters of; and, if the Lives of Chriſtians were conformable to their Principles, whether they wou'd not afford us the moſt agreeable Proſpect of Piety and Virtue that ever the World beheld, or ever can expect to aſpire to.

" If the Goſpel is a Fable, as the foreſaid " Author * has ſomewhere obſerv'd, it's " the moſt profitable one that ever was de- " vis'd, and the moſt cunningly devis'd that " ever was ſhewn to the World; and ſhewn " to the World at an Age, when it was beſt " able to detect the Cheat." And I'll add, leaſt able of it ſelf, by virtue of human Policy or Power only, to withſtand thoſe inveterate

* *Smith*'s Appeal.

veterate Adverſaries, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it at firſt had to encounter with.

It was very poſſible for either of theſe Powers to have cruſh'd Chriſtianity in the *Embrio*, had it advanc'd any one *Dogma* or Principle that was apparently oppoſite to any known Duty, or contrary to any Law whatſoever, that was worthy of God to preſcribe, or a reaſonable Creature to ſubmit to. Had it not manifeſtly clear'd up the Truth and Reality of God and Religion; had it not taken care of the Intereſt and Happineſs of Mankind in all relations of Life: had it not given *Honour, to whom Honour; Cuſtom, to whom Cuſtom; Fear, to whom Fear* was due: had it relax'd that Diſcipline and Duty which was neceſſary to advance true Piety, Juſtice and Charity among Men: In a word, had Chriſtianity been wanting in any one poſitive or negative Precept, or left any one Virtue uncommanded, any one Vice unforbid; its firſt Enemies and Oppoſers wanted neither Capacities to diſcover, nor Inclinations to expoſe, nor Power to make the beſt of ſuch an Imperfection. But from that time to this we ſee plainly that no ſuch Flaw has yet been diſcern'd: and if its modern Antagoniſts were able to do it, I imagine it wou'd be the moſt effectual courſe they cou'd take to gain the point they aim at.

When

When they go about to diſpute Prophecies, decry Miracles, and pick and cull ſome ſuſpicious or controverted Paſſages, which have no relation either to Knowledge or Practice, and perhaps are not very material whether Mankind knew 'em or not; they begin, I'm apt to imagine, at the wrong end of their Work: they ought firſt to ſhew that the Syſtem is erroneous and imperfect; that it is deficient in ſuch or ſuch points of Duty, and is neither ſo compleat a Rule, nor ſo perfect a Guide as *Nature* would be, was it left to its own Suggeſtions; they ought to let us ſee the ſeveral Omiſſions with which it is chargeable, the ſeveral *Errata* and Miſtakes that manifeſtly appear in ſuch and ſuch particular Inſtances: They ought to compare its Doctrine with the Dictates of Reaſon, and tell us wherein *this* tends to make Men more compleatly virtuous and holy than *that* does. Wou'd they do this, and do it effectually; Prophecies, Miracles, *&c.* (which ſo much trouble them) wou'd fall of courſe; it won'd either appear then that they were not of God, or that he has ſome further Diſcoveries to make, more conſiſtent with true Religion, and more worthy of him to reveal, and Mankind to receive, than theſe are; it wou'd then appear that Chriſtianity is either a falſe or an imperfect Syſtem. But if this cannot be done; if they cannot ſhew us wherein it is either redundant

redundant or deficient; all that can be inferr'd from their Objections, is, that they think it too *ſtrait-lac'd*; and that if it allow'd more Indulgences to human Paſſions, if it permitted Men, for inſtance, to turn away their Wives when tir'd of 'em, or to keep an obſequious Miſtreſs when a Wife wou'd not be ſo, and the like, all wou'd be well. If this is the caſe, it's to no purpoſe to argue with them; for what can be ſaid for the beſt Laws and Rules of living in the World, if Men are reſolv'd not to obey them, and will follow ſuch only as are more agreeable to their carnal and deprav'd Appetites? But ſuch wou'd do well to conſider, that the beſt Guide is always the ſafeſt to follow; and though he may perhaps carry us againſt the biaſs and diſpoſition of our own Inclination, though he may poſſibly lead us into rugged and diſagreeable Paths; yet if he brings us ſafe, and without danger to our Journey's end, if he preſerves us from thoſe Pits and Precipices which we ſee on every ſide of us, we've great reaſon to acknowledge his Fidelity, and be thankful for his Care, and not upbraid him for being ſo tenacious of his Poſt and Duty, as not to ſuffer us to go our own way. It's true, let him be as diligent and careful as he will, we are notwithſtanding liable to ſtumble or make a falſe ſtep; but if we impute this to his over-preciſeneſs or ſeverity, if

we alledge that it is rather owing to his poſitive and dogmatical Humour, than to our Neglect and Inadvertency, we're ſurprizingly ungrateful to the charitable Hand that affords us Relief, and arrogantly aſſume to our ſelves, that very Prerogative and Province, which, as our Guide, he had a right to.

But I'll not ſay that the *Deiſts* make objections againſt Chriſtianity for ſuch like reaſons; I'll charitably ſuppoſe that they've better purpoſes in view than to run it down, meerly becauſe it does not allow of thoſe Relaxations and Indulgences, which human Nature ſeems to require and call for: till therefore they let us know what theſe are; till they are pleas'd to oblige us with a particular Syſtem of their *Agenda's* and *Credenda's*; till they withdraw from all religious Communion and Fellowſhip of the Chriſtian Church, and ſet up a ſeparate Worſhip of their own, which I am ſure the *Religion of Nature* teaches, if it teaches any thing; till they do this, I ſay, I'll take leave of them for the preſent, and examine an Author or two, who have writ in favour of *Natural Religion*, and are upon that account oppoſite to the Notions and Sentiments which I've advanc'd.

There's no need, I preſume, to make any Agology for my ſelf, from the far ſuperiour Learning, Piety and Knowledge of theſe great and good Men. *A Child*, as we ſay,

upon a Giant's Shoulders, will ſee further than he can: but as I pretend not to ſee with mine own Eyes only, but have likewiſe the Evidence of others, who have either directly advanc'd or obliquely intimated the ſame thing; it's a natural Privilege, which can't be deny'd me, to chuſe the ſide that pleaſes me beſt; and which, according to my way of thinking, appears to have the ſtrongeſt Arguments in its Defence.

SECT. V.

THE firſt I ſhall begin with is Dr. *Towerſon*, who ſays, * that "being it "appears not that Man at firſt had any o-"ther reveal'd Law of God, than that of "not taſting the forbidden Fruit; and ma-"ny Nations of the World have no Oppor-"tunity to know thoſe Revelations he hath "ſince made; it follows, that God hath plant-"ed in the Soul of each particular Man, a "Law by which he is to act, or at leaſt "ſuch Principles from which he may de-"duce it." In anſwer to which, I obſerve,

1. That that Law of *eating the forbidden Fruit* was only *ſignificative*, as Mr. *Ainſworth* calls it, reſpecting that Love,

* Introd. to the Decalogue.

Honour, and Obedience, which *Adam* cou'd not but know was due to God, as his Creator, Preſerver and Governour; and is not ſo properly to be call'd a *Revelation* of the divine Will, as a proof or experiment of his Ability, to retain and perform that Knowledge and Duty, which he was before endow'd with, and had clear conceptions of.

2. Whatever thoſe endowments and conceptions were, it's very certain that they were greatly impair'd by that Act of Diſobedience; and ſuppoſing *Adam* to be poſſeſs'd of them before his Fall, in the higheſt degree and perfection imaginable, which in mine opinion is not to be deny'd, yet it's much to be queſtion'd, whether he did not afterwards ſtand in need of frequent hints and admonitions; and had them accordingly, to keep up a Senſe and Idea of them in his Mind. It's true, we hear no more of God's confabulating with *Adam*, *viva voce*, after that fatal Accident; but as there are frequent inſtances of ſuch a converſation with his Children and Poſterity for many Generations, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe the ſame with reſpect to himſelf; and that the end of it was to keep up ſuch a ſenſe of Knowledge and Duty in them, as their own natural Corruption and Depravity wou'd, in all likelihood, obliterate and deface, without ſuch a Communication.

3.

3. When Mankind at firſt ſet out with ſo perfect, ſo indulgent, and ſo good a Guide, and liv'd ſo long as to communicate what they knew and had learn'd of him, even to the tenth Generation; when *Lamech* the Father of *Noah* was ſix and fifty Years of age at the death of *Adam*, and *Terah* the Father of *Abram* ſixty Years of age at the death of *Noah*, what need had the World then of any other Revelations than what were communicated *viva voce* by theſe good Men that were Heads of Families? and how cou'd their Poſterity and Deſcendants miſs of receiving full Information in all parts both of Knowledge and Duty, who had two ſuch great and good Men to diſcipline and inſtruct them? By ſuch Methods of Information, and not from natural Inſtinct and Endowment, it ſeems reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that Mankind ever after retain'd ſome faint Ideas of God, and their Duty to him; and it's not unlikely, that the more remote they were from theſe their firſt Founders and Informers, the more abſurd and monſtrous were their conceptions in theſe reſpects, and the more unable they were to retain that Knowledge which their Forefathers inculcated and recommended.

The World, generally ſpeaking, had not forgot that one material principle or poſition, that *there is a God*; but what a Monſter had they made of him, into how many

different *Genus's* and *Species* had they tranſform'd him before the coming of Chriſt? and with what apiſh and ridiculous Ceremonies, what inhumane and barbarous Solemnities did they pay homage and ſervice to him, till later informations and more expreſs diſcoveries, gave them a better light? This convinces me, that there's no ſuch *Law implanted upon the Soul*, as this learned Author has aſſerted; but that all the knowledge that ever Mankind have attain'd to or been able to retain, is owing to ſuch external means of Information as before mention'd; and that the *accuſing or excuſing Conſcience*, hinted at in the place before cited, as another Argument for ſuch a *Law*, is nothing elſe but the reſult of ſuch Notions and Apprehenſions of Knowledge and Duty as Men ſtill retain'd, or ſuch as cuſtom and familiarity had made habitual. For the ſame Author ſays, that " we pretend not to " infer the Goodneſs or Evil of any Action " in it ſelf from the Conſcience's either ac- " quitting or condemning the Perſon that " doth it; but only that there is ſuch a thing " as Good or Evil." This is no more than what Experience informs us of daily; and if it did not, the very notion of a God, be it ever ſo abſurd and ridiculous, will always inſpire us with thoughts and apprehenſions, that this or that Action is pleaſing to him, and another is not. If from the

notion

notion of *Good and Evil*, natural Religion be inferr'd, we may then conclude that Brutes are not entirely deſtitute of ſuch a Principle; for we may obſerve, ſome of them eſpecially, more acute and ready to diſtinguiſh between them, than Men are. But if by *Good and Evil* is here meant *Happineſs* and *Miſery*, or an inward ſenſe or apprehenſion of Rewards and Puniſhments, reſulting from the good and evil Actions of Men's Lives; this may as well be aſcrib'd to *Education* and *Information*, as to the Dictates of *Nature*: and it's as reaſonable to ſuppoſe that Men were at firſt told of ſuch compenſations, as that their Notions of them were innate.

What opinion had *Cain* of God, when he ask'd him if he was his *Brother's keeper?* But when he had told him that the Voice of his Blood cry'd unto him from the Ground; when he had let him ſee, the ſeveral fatal Conſequences of that barbarous and inhumane Action; when he had inform'd him that the *Ground*, for that reaſon, ſhou'd not *yield her Strength*, and that he himſelf ſhou'd be a *Fugitive and a Vagabond in the Earth: Cain* then cou'd ſay, that *his Puniſhment was greater than he cou'd bear*; and his Remorſe and Terror became, in ſome meaſure, adequate to the heinouſneſs of the Crime he ſtood charg'd with.

The ſame Author obſerves, that the " Pre-
" ſervation of our ſelves is a branch of this
" Law ; and we conſequently are Tranſgreſ-
" ſors of it, if we neglect it." But I'd be glad to know, what we have more of this than the Beaſts of the Field, and whether they are not more directed by Inſtinct to ſupport Life, foreſee Dangers, and provide againſt them, than we be.

He ſays further, that " to adopt any thing
" into the like Honour with God, is a di-
" minution of his Honour, and conſequent-
" ly a breach of *this fundamental Law*, as
" well as of that which ſaith, *Thou ſhalt*
" *have no other Gods beſide me.*" But if that had been a *fundamental Law*, what need had there been of one poſitive and expreſs? and if Mankind were naturally ſenſible of that Honour and Veneration which is due to God only, why did they attribute it to many, and thereby give occaſion for that expreſs Precept, *Thou ſhalt have none other?* If God had not expreſſly forbid it the *Jews*, they'd multiply'd *Deities* as faſt as the *Gentiles*; and if he had not vouchſafed ſome particular Men, in all Ages, till the giving of the Law, ſuch a familiarity and intercourſe as was neceſſary to keep them within the bounds of their Duty in this reſpect, Mankind till then had either had many Gods, or none at all, and ſo had become either *Polytheiſts* or *Atheiſts*; which

are

are both ſuch monſtrous Abſurdities, as, one would think, human Reaſon could never admit of. Such a *Candle* is *Reaſon* till it is lighted by *Revelation*, and ſuch are all human Capacities and Faculties, till God is pleaſed to remove the Impediments, and diſſipate thoſe Paſſions and Prejudices which obſtruct and hinder them from performing their proper Work. *Balaam* could not ſee the Angel, tho' his Aſs did, till God had open'd his Eyes; and why could not he ſee him? but becauſe he was ſo intent upon the *Wages of Unrighteouſneſs*, as St. *Peter* calls them, that even a Miracle could not divert him, till a further inſtance of the divine Power intervened to convince him of his Error.

By ſuch Paſſions and Prejudices has this *Candle of the Lord* been extinguiſh'd, and what can we more properly aſcribe theſe to, than the Fall of Man; which, as the learned Biſhop *Saunderſon* obſerves *, depriv'd Conſcience of its Rectitude and Integrity: a Misfortune only capable of being retriev'd and made good by the Blood of Chriſt.

The next to be conſider'd, is the Author of *The Duty of Man*. " There are " ſome things, ſays he, which God has ſo " ſtamp'd upon our Souls, that we naturally " know them; that is, we ſhould have known " them to be our Duty, tho' we had never

* De Obligat. Conſc.

" been

" been told ſo by the Scriptures." For an anſwer to this, I may refer my reader to what I have already ſaid of *Education*, *Cuſtom*, *Example*, and the like.

The *general Duties* which he there inſtances, have, it's confeſs'd, *generally* prevail'd in the heathen World; and I'll not pretend to argue from ſome particular Monſters and Prodigies, that there's no Regularity in the Laws of Religion, any more than of Nature: But what then? Is it not as reaſonable to imagine that theſe and ſuch like Principles were handed down by ſome external means of Information, as that they were naturally imprinted in every one's Mind? Men, it is true, have *generally worſhip'd* either the real, or ſome ſuppoſitious God; but why could not that *natural Light* by which they ſaw that there is a God, let them ſee the inconſiſtency of the one with the Being of the other? Why could not that Reaſon which told them that there was a Creator who made Man, tell them at the ſame time, that that could not be he whom Man made? It was certainly as inconſiſtent with Reaſon to *worſhip* the Works of their own Hands, as it was reaſonable to *worſhip* him whoſe handy-work they were: and yet that Reaſon ſhould ſuggeſt the one, and not the other, is a ſtrange inſtance of its Veracity and Fidelity, and ſhews it to be very unfit for that Poſt and Duty, which ſome Men are ſo ſolicitous to aſſign to it.

That

That *Children* have ever thought themſelves *bound* to be dutiful to *their Parents*, is rather owing to the Care they have of, and the Authority they have over, them, than to any *natural Inſtinct* or *innate Principle*. They depend upon them, and ſubſiſt by them, and therefore by a kind of natural Inſtinct are inclin'd to follow, and be ſubſervient unto, them, as the *Fœtus* of ſome other Animals do too: but if ſome will have it, that there are certain *innate* Principles of Gratitude to Benefactors, and certain *natural* Obligations of Duty to prudent and indulgent Governours, I'll not oppoſe them; for every Cauſe will produce its neceſſary and natural Effects; and the moſt ſavage Diſpoſitions, if not abſolutely untractable, ſeldom miſs of being mollified and made gentle, when repeated inſtances of Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion have interpos'd to ſhew them the Abſurdity of a contrary Conduct.

" The Law of Nature, ſays St. *Jerom*, " Children and Infants know nothing of; " but they ſinning without the Command- " ment, are not obliged by any Law. They " may curſe their Father and Mother, and " beat their Parents, and yet be guiltleſs, " becauſe they have not receiv'd the Law " of Wiſdom, or the Knowledge of Good and " Evil; but when they have attain'd to " that," that is, when any expreſs Law or receiv'd Cuſtom (we'll ſuppoſe) has taught them

them their Duty in this reſpect, " and they " have acquir'd that Underſtanding, as to " deſire what is good, and ſhun what is " evil; Sin then begins to revive, and they " are chargeable with the commiſſion of it, " that act otherwiſe *."

All that can be ſaid of Nature in this caſe, is, that it is conſenting to this or that negative or poſitive Duty, when a Man comes to years of Diſcretion, and is capable of diſtinguiſhing between Right and Wrong. But ſuppoſe a Child left to the Tuition and Government of any indifferent Perſon till he attains to theſe Capacities, ſuppoſe him never to meet with any Inſtances of paternal Care or Reſpect from his Parents during all that time; and ſuppoſing an irreconcileable Enmity and mortal Hatred between the *natural* and the *foſter* Parents (none of which are impoſſible;) to which ſide, can we reaſonably think, would this Child or Son incline? To his undoubtedly, that was the Inſtrument of his *Well-being*, and not of his *Being* only: and I make no queſtion, that was there no Law to reſtrain him but that of Nature, properly ſo call'd, he'd not ſtick to murder the one, in order to preſerve and defend the other; ſo far would he be from thinking himſelf indiſpenſibly oblig'd *to honour his Parents*. If this Inſtance is queſtionable, let it be conſider'd how

* Tom. 3.

natural

natural it is for a Man to be regardleſs of, and indifferent towards, thoſe that treat him in the ſame way, and how propenſe and forward he uſually is to ſhew his reſpect and gratitude to thoſe from whom he has receiv'd Favours, and to whoſe Care and Munificence, under God, he owes the Happineſs and good Situation of his preſent Circumſtances. This kind of compenſation is *natural*, becauſe it's the natural and neceſſary Reſult of ſuch moving and influencing Obligations; but to expect it where there are no ſuch, to ſuppoſe a Man will pay an obſequious Reſpect and Veneration, where he never had any proof of the leaſt Reſpect and Indulgence, and from whence he never expects to receive any, is to imagine him of a *Stoical Apathy* indeed, and one whom Affronts and Injuries are as uncapable of diſobliging, as a contrary treatment is of making him obliging and good-humour'd.

If we can ſuppoſe a Parent to be abſolutely regardleſs of a Child, we may with very good reaſon, I think, ſuppoſe that Child equally regardleſs of his Parent; and if a Foundling, when come to years of Maturity and Diſcretion, ſhould be brought to the knowledge of that unnatural and inhumane Wretch, not to ſay worſe, his Mother, and was effectually appriz'd how ſhe had expos'd him, and what Miſery ſhe had render'd him liable to, had not the Charity and Compaſſion

paſſion of others interpos'd and prevented it; it would be hard, I imagine, to excite in him any natural ſenſe or impreſſion of Duty to ſuch a Monſter, but he'd deteſt and abhor her as an unnatural Inſtrument of Barbarity, with the utmoſt Indignation and Reſentment that injur'd Innocency, a Senſe of his own Miſery, and his Mother's relentleſs Cruelty, could inſpire him with.

If the Honour that is due from Children to their Parents reſults from the Dictates of *natural Reaſon*, it is to be preſumed that ſome better *Reaſon* is to be given for it, than meerly becauſe they are their *Parents:* for by that Act of Generation they are no more than the Inſtruments of their *Being*, and this often without their Inclination and Intention. But if we throw into the Account the Conſideration of their *Well-being* alſo, then indeed there is a juſt demand for the profoundeſt Honour and Obedience which they are capable of paying them, and they cannot be wanting in the minuteſt Point of Duty whatſoever, but they become chargeable with the baſeſt Ingratitude that the neglect or contempt of *human Favours eſpecially* can fix upon them. Upon this Conſideration indeed, every one's own Reaſon will readily tell him, he is wanting in his Duty to his Parents, if he's not ſtrictly obſequious and obedient to all their lawful Commands, and pays them not that Honour, Reſpect

and

and Veneration, which their Care and Indulgence require and call for; I ſay, his own natural Reaſon will tell him this, *tho' he had never been told ſo by the Scriptures.* But to ſuppoſe him under any Obligation of Duty to ſuch Parents, as abandon him to Miſery and Ruin as ſoon as he is born; to imagine that he is bound to honour that Woman, as his Mother, who expos'd him, naked and helpleſs, to the mercileſs tyranny of Hunger and Cold, Death and Miſery, and never return'd to her Duty, nor relented this her Barbarity; to ſuppoſe, I ſay, ſuch a Monſter entitled to any inſtances of Reſpect or Honour whatſoever, is to me ſo inconſiſtent with Reaſon, that I'd rank her with the worſt of Enemies, and juſt treat her as one, or worſe if poſſible, that is reſolutely bent to make me as miſerable as Malice can ſuggeſt.

" They are worthy of Love, ſays *Tully* *, " who can ſhew cauſe why they ſhould be " belov'd :" And an Enemy is worthy of it, but it's upon the account of the Excellency and Dignity of Human Nature reſident in him †, rather than any perſonal Reſpect or real Merit he can pretend to as ſuch; it's becauſe of ſome *natural Conſtitution*, *neceſſary Property*, or *unalterable Condition of Humanity*, that he has a right to be belov'd, ex-

* De Amicitia. † Dr. *Barrow.*

cluſive

cluſive of the divine Precept relating to that Duty. And with this Love a Child is, and ought to be, bound to love ſuch a Mother; which implies no more than an inward *Benevolence* diſpoſing him to ſuch Acts of Beneficence and Charity towards her, as her Exigencies may require and call for, and which any other Enemy has a right to, as well as ſhe. But to ſay there's any Honour or Veneration due to ſuch a Parent, as a Parent, ſeems to me ſo inconſiſtent with Reaſon, that did not Religion oblige me to *love* an Enemy, I ſhould think myſelf oblig'd to *hate* her, was I her Son.

" The *Honour* that is done to any one " among Men, ſays Biſhop *Patrick* *, is " always a publick thing," and is *not to be expreſs'd* " without ſuch external Signs " as are real Teſtimonies of thoſe inward " Thoughts, Opinion, Eſteem and Affection," *we have of and for the Perſon we do honour to.* If Reaſon therefore obliges me to honour ſuch a Mother, ſome of theſe Conſiderations muſt go before to influence and engage me, and ſome again before them to induce me to have that Veneration and Regard; for Reaſon muſt have ſome Rule to go by, ſome Motive or Inducement to act upon. But if in this caſe there are none ſuch; if I have never receiv'd any inſtances

* *On Publick Prayer.*

of

of maternal Care, Reſpect, or Indulgence from her, what Opinion can I have of, or what Eſteem or Affection can I have for, her? Why, none at all, I think, but what by the Laws of Chriſtianity a profeſs'd Enemy may expect from me; and theſe are common Civility, an inoffenſive Deportment, and a Diſpoſition to do her all the real good that her Occaſions may require, and mine Abilities will admit of. I may *honour* her, it's true, as an *Elder*, that is, one ſuperiour to me in Age, but not a *Mother*; for if I know and am aſſur'd ſhe attempted to murder me as ſoon as I was born, and if (not being delirious, and out of her right Mind) ſhe has not ſhewn the leaſt regard or concern for me ever ſince; I cannot think myſelf obliged to pay her the *Honour* that is due from a Child to a tender and indulgent Parent, which, if it was a Duty incumbent upon me by the *Law of Nature*, I ought, I could not but do it, let her treatment of me be what it wou'd.

In this caſe, and others of the like nature, I know the Laws of Chriſtianity are expreſs, and do not admit of any exceptions, any proviſoes whatſoever; and the reaſon, I preſume, is, becauſe God will not ſuffer us to be our own Judges, and carve for ourſelves: having indulg'd us a Revelation eſtabliſh'd upon the beſt Reaſon, he'll not allow that purblind faltering Reaſon that had before ſo

ſurprizingly mis-led the World to do ſo any more. He'll not permit *Reaſon* to come in competition with *Revelation*, nor indulge us ſuch a diſpenſing power as we are but too apt to aſſume, when the diſagreeable circumſtance or incident concerns ourſelves.

God ſays, *Honour thy Father and Mother*, without exception; but *Nature* ſteps in, and ſays, no: for if they have abandon'd and expos'd thee to deſtruction and miſery, there's no more Honour due to ſuch a Father and Mother, than is to an Enemy; which every one will allow not to be the ſame with that which is due to Parents. Inſtances of this kind are as many as there are relative Duties enjoin'd in Scripture, and we cannot meet with any one Precept relating to Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Maſters and Servants, *&c.* but what is abſolute and unconditional; not one exception, admitted or expreſs'd in any caſe whatſoever, when or why a Man may lawfully and without violating the Command, act otherwiſe. And yet Reaſon tells us, that there may be inſtances which will admit of ſuch exceptions; one of which is the caſe before mention'd, and is that *deteſtabile Scelus*, as *Tully* calls it, that horrid and deteſtable Act of Wickedneſs; as cannot but give a Child very ſhocking Notions of ſuch a Parent.

Wherein did *Brutus* tranſgreſs the Laws of Reaſon (tho' perhaps of Nature) in putting

ting his Sons to death for conſpiring againſt their Country? What did *Oreſtes* more than any other dutiful Child and abſolute Prince would do, in putting his Mother to death for murdering his own Father? Reaſon ſeems extreamly to favour ſuch unnatural Actions upon all ſuch ſhocking and deteſtable Occaſions, and I am inclin'd to think that if either human or divine Laws, or both, did not interpoſe, Nature in time might find more exceptions than theſe, and even be brought to think that ſhe was not oblig'd to act any otherwiſe than Brutes do in theſe reſpects; that is, to forget all kind both of Relation and Obligation, and if not to deſtroy and prey upon, yet to have a promiſcuous coition and a generative familiarity, Mother with Son, and Brother with Siſter, as they have.

The next that ſhould fall under conſideration, is Biſhop *Wilkins*; but I need but obſerve from his Definition of Natural Religion, and the immediate Obſervations he makes thereupon, that his Arguments are all grounded upon preſent Informations, and what Men know of God and their Duty now, and not what they did know, or would have known without ſuch light. But after all he ſays upon this Subject, when he comes at laſt to tell us, that " it cannot be deny'd " but that in this dark and degenerate State " into which Mankind is ſunk, there is " great want of a clearer Light to diſcover

" our Duty to us with greater certainty, " and to put it beyond all doubt and diſpute " what is the good and acceptable Will of " God:" After all this, I ſay, it's manifeſt that there's nothing in this Religion, even in his own Opinion, to be depended upon; that it is no certain Rule to walk by; that it is a meer *State of Darkneſs and Degeneracy*, and at the beſt is but like a Man in a glimmering and imperfect Light, that miſtaking Mole-hills for Mountains, and Men for Trees, is in as unhappy a condition as one quite blind.

For whatever this and other great Men have ſaid in behalf of *Natural* Religion, the preſent Biſhop of *London* has oblig'd us with a very rational Account, in obſerving, that " ſeveral of our moſt eminent Divines " after the Reſtoration ſet themſelves both " by preaching and writing to enlarge upon " the importance of moral Duties, and to " recommend them with great earneſtneſs to " the Regard of the People; to ſuch a de- " gree, as to ſtand charg'd by others with " too great a diſregard of the Doctrines and " Duties peculiar to Chriſtianity. Whereas " the caſe really was this: During the times " of Confuſion many of the Preachers had " not only forborn to inculcate the Duties " of Morality, but had labour'd to de- " preciate them, and to perſuade the " People that *Faith* was all, and *Works* " no-

"nothing *." The Reaſon undoubtedly of ſuch Preachers extolling the one to ſuch an extravagant pitch as to depreciate and decry the other, was their implacable deteſtation and abhorrence of Popery; for as that was the *Teſſera* of thoſe times to try Mens Principles and Inclinations by, he that could go the greateſt lengths to prove its Abſurdities, was commonly reputed the moſt Orthodox and moſt zealous Defender of the then preſent Cauſe. They therefore that ſtood up in behalf of moral Duties, did but do it to moderate theſe extravagancies, and to reduce the Doctrine, which was carried to an extreme on both ſides, within its proper bounds; they did it to convince deluded and mis-led People that both *Faith* and *Works* were of abſolute neceſſity in a Chriſtian Life, and that to disjoin them, was like ſeparating the Superſtructure from the Foundation, or making the *Effect* independent of the *Cauſe* that brought about and occaſion'd it. It was nothing therefore extraordinary, if they run into ſome extremes, in ſaying more of a Subject than it would well admit of; but they ſhould have diſtinguiſh'd, in mine Opinion, between *Natural* and *Moral*, or between thoſe Principles which are *innate* and thoſe which are *acquir'd*; and then it would have appear'd that it was

* *Second Paſt. Lett.*

not *natural Religion* commonly ſo call'd, but *moral Duties*, they were pleading for; which are as different one from another, as *Inſtinct* is from *Reaſon*, or *Habit* and *Cuſtom* from a *poſitive* and *expreſs* Law.

It's natural for a Man to eat when he is hungry, to drink when he is thirſty, *&c.* but who ever ſaid it was ſo to worſhip God, to be honeſt, juſt, charitable, and the like? If we ſay that the Paſſions of Pride, Luſt, Covetouſneſs, *&c.* are *natural*, we do not miſapply the expreſſion; becauſe we too often find in ourſelves a ſtrong propenſity and inclination to theſe and ſuch like Vices: but to ſay that Mankind are *naturally* wiſe, religious and good, is a notorious abuſe of the Term, and every Man's own Experience will convince him, that there's no more propriety than truth in it.

I do not ſay that when we ſpeak of *natural* Reaſon, *natural* Faculties, *natural* Abilities, *&c.* that then we abuſe the word, and make it expreſſive of ſome ſenſe or meaning of which it is not properly capable; for *Nature* undoubtedly is endow'd with theſe and ſuch like Accompliſhments. I mean, it is capable of having, retaining, and improving them; and if it had them not, Mankind wou'd but be another *Species* of Brutes, and in many reſpects of the worſt ſort too: but ſurely there's a wide difference between theſe, and what are properly call'd *moral* Duties,

between what is eſſential to, and, as it were, inſeparable from human Nature, and what it cannot attain to and come at the knowledge of, but by the uſe of Means. They may, it's true, be call'd *natural*, when Senſation, Reflection, Information, and the like, have imprinted them upon our Minds, and repreſented them to us as compatible with human Reaſon; that is, when they appear to us reaſonable Duties, and we are fully convinc'd, from that conſideration, of the Obligation we lie under to adhere to and perform them. Theſe are properly *Moral*, which reſpect the Manners, Demeanour, or outward Behaviour of Men with regard to Duty, and which, according to the beſt Light and Information they can get, are indiſpenſibly neceſſary; whereas what is properly *natural*, is a kind of Endowment or Accompliſhment inſeparable, as it were, from Nature, and wants no other reaſon to be given for it, but that we are ſo diſpos'd and inclin'd. For inſtance: When I ſay ſuch a Man has a quick Apprehenſion, a retentive Memory, a good Underſtanding, *&c.* I mean no more than that he's endow'd by *Nature*, or *naturally* endow'd, with ſuch Qualifications and Accompliſhments: but when I ſay he's a ſober, honeſt and religious Man, my meaning is, that Reaſon, or natural Conſcience, tells him he ought ſo to be; that is, it's his intereſt to be ſo in all theſe reſpects, and that he may be

ſo, he's often forced to act againſt the Suggeſtions of Nature to retain and improve theſe good Qualities.

To act by natural Impulſe or Inſtinct only, is to ſuppoſe Man a mere Machine, a kind of Clock-work, agitated by ſome *Primum mobile*, or main Spring which neceſſarily moves the whole Syſtem; but to ſuppoſe him a *rational* Agent, endow'd with Capacities to diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, is to ſuppoſe him a kind of Governour or Controller of himſelf; one that is liable to do amiſs, and at the ſame time capable of countermanding and reſtraining himſelf, or one that labours under a powerful *impetus* or inclination to follow *Nature*, but knows that it's both his Duty and Intereſt, in many caſes, to tack about and ſteer another Courſe.

For theſe and ſuch like Reaſons, I think thoſe that have confounded *Natural* and *Moral*, and treated them as one and the ſame, ſet out wrong, in that they have not diſtinguiſh'd which is which, but ſeem all along to ſuppoſe that they have both one meaning and one tendency; whereas they are in almoſt all points of Duty the very reverſe one to another, and ſeem to have much the ſame relation as there is between the Sun and the World, or the Soul and the Body; that is, the one is to inform, actuate, and inlighten the other: and wherever *Nature*

is

is liable to digreſs, or be at a ſtand for want of knowing what it ought to do, there *Morality*, or the rational Knowledge of Duty, (which is only attainable by the uſe of Means) interpoſes to direct and inform it.

The buſineſs of *Nature* goes no farther than to direct us in the Offices and Duties of a *natural* Life, and this is little more than what the Brutes by inſtinct are enclin'd to; but *Morality* teaches us how to demean ourſelves in all the relations we have to others, and by recommending this or that Duty, as conſiſtent with Reaſon, lays thereby an Obligation upon us to comply with it. Every Duty therefore that comes thus recommended, and which Mankind cannot but univerſally ſubmit to as ſoon as ever Reaſon admits of it, is a *moral* Duty; for, as Biſhop *Taylor* has obſerv'd *, " whatever " is commanded in the Scriptures of the " New Teſtament to all Mankind, is either " Moral in its nature, or is ſo by adoption: " which laſt Clauſe I put in, ſays he, by " reaſon of the Sacraments, and ſome glo- " rious Appendages of Morality, and heroical " Acts of Charity commanded by Chriſt; " the obſervation of which, altho' it be not " Moral, or of prime natural Neceſſity, yet " becauſe they are commanded by Chriſt, " whoſe Law is to oblige us as long as the

* Duct. Dubitant.

" Sun

" Sun and Moon endure: to us Chriſtians,
" and to all whom the notice of them do ar-
" rive, it is all one in reſpect of our Duty,
" and hath no real difference in the Event
" of things."

If what is given in charge to all Mankind, and what none are exempt from the Obligation of obſerving, as ſoon as they are convinc'd that it is their Duty, be not a *moral* Law, I'm at a loſs to know what the Term means. The *Decalogue* is no more moral than any other Precepts in the Bible, if we confound *natural* and *moral*, and make 'em ſynonimous Expreſſions, ſignifying the ſame things; for who ever would have thought that all or any of theſe Duties were of perpetual Obligation, had not they been convinc'd that God expreſſly commanded them? And if from thence they are call'd *Moral*, then all others are ſo, that come ſo recommended. From whence it both follows that *natural* and *moral* are words of a very different ſignification, and that every Duty is *moral* as well as the ten Commandments, when it appears that God has enjoin'd it, as he did them. For what is *moral*, but a Law of God reſpecting ſome Duty which he expreſſly requires us to perform? what is *natural*, but ſome inſtinct or impulſe of Mind, which we cannot but do without any ſuch expreſs or poſitive Law? If we were under an unavoidable Neceſſity of believing in one God

God only, and could not be induced to think that there can be more; if it was as impoſſible for us to treat his Name, Titles, or Attributes with diſreſpect and irreverence, as to run into danger when we ſee and may lawfully avoid it; then indeed I'd ſay, that theſe and ſuch like Precepts are *natural* Duties. But if we are liable to run into the very reverſe; if it has been controverted whether there are many Gods, or none at all; and if the generality of Mankind were more inclin'd to believe that there were many, than but one only; then I think we may conclude, that the belief of one is not a *natural*, but a *moral* Duty; and that in ſo expreſſing ourſelves, we are guilty of as great an Abſurdity almoſt, as the Deiſts are in imagining that he never made any but a *natural* (as I may call it) Revelation of his Will.

I do not ſee what Principle there is in Nature, to induce a Man to believe that there is any God at all. *Clemens Alexandrinus* mentions one *Baſilides* that was of this Opinion, and quotes *Valentinus* for ſaying, that there are ſuperfluous Precepts both in the Old and New Teſtament, becauſe a Man may be ſav'd by *Nature* without them; and that without the coming of Chriſt, *Nature* in due time would have ſhone out and recover'd its original Luſtre and Beauty. But the good Man himſelf, it's plain, was of another

another Mind, in ſaying, that if the coming of Chriſt was neceſſary *for that Occaſion*, theſe *boaſted* Properties of Nature wou'd *neceſſarily* vaniſh and diſappear. By which he undoubtedly means, that if Mankind by Nature cou'd either have known God, or any part of Duty relating to him, there had been no need of any further Information: but this was abſolutely impoſſible; *Nature* cou'd not, was not able to make them any ſuch Aſſiſtance, and therefore the coming of Chriſt was neceſſary, to inſpire them with that Knowledge of God and their Duty, which otherwiſe it was impoſſible for them to attain to.

But I have already ſhewn how the Belief of a God was preſerv'd and kept up in the World. It's very certain that *Nature*, properly ſo call'd, had no hand in it; and that if it had been left to itſelf, without ſuch means of information as were then made uſe of; if this Notion had not been inculcated and recommended from Father to Son, for many Generations, immediately after the Creation; Mankind had had no more Notion of a Creator than thoſe Beaſts that *Xenocrates* had the ſame indulgent Opinion of *, namely, that *he was not without hopes that even they had ſome Knowledge of God.* I believe indeed, that if *Nature* had been left to

* Stromat.

her-

herſelf, ſhe had been equally kind to both; that is, given Mankind juſt as much and no more, than ſhe has given the Beaſts: but as there's a wide difference in their reſpective Capacities, Deſignations and Ends, as they were both created perfect with reſpect to thoſe different Purpoſes they were differently deſign'd for, we muſt ſuppoſe that Mankind had vaſtly the preheminence. But whether they are not now, in their natural State, ſunk down, if poſſible, to a degree below them; whether they are not in their Inclinations and natural Paſſions, without ſome expreſs and poſitive Law to reſtrain them, the greater Beaſts of the two, is to me beyond all queſtion, and I'm of opinion (to uſe the Words of Mr. *Wollaſton*) that "were it not "for that ſenſe of Virtue which is principally "preſerv'd (ſo far as it is preſerv'd) by na-"tional *Forms* and *Habits* of Religion," (to which I'll add national *Laws* and *Rule s* of Government) "Men wou'd ſoon loſe all "ſenſe of *Religion*, *Order* and *Oeconomy*, "and run wild, prey upon one another, and "do what elſe the worſt of Savages do *."

And now having mention'd this Author, I muſt not let him paſs without ſome Animadverſions, which as a *Delineator of the Religion of Nature*, and the laſt I know upon that Subject, neceſſarily fall under Conſideration in purſuance of my preſent Under-

* Religion of Nat. &c.

taking.

taking. I had gone through at leaſt half of this Work before ever I read any one part of his Book; and the Reaſon why I did ſo, was, becauſe I wou'd not be biaſs'd by what he might ſay, as ſuppoſing him to be on my ſide of the Queſtion; eſpecially conſidering, that the very firſt thing he undertakes to anſwer, is, whether *there is really any ſuch thing as Natural Religion properly and truly ſo call'd?* Upon my very opening the Book, and ſeeing that Queſtion propos'd, I took it for granted that he had anſwer'd it directly, and that all the other Propoſitions which his Friend *A. F.* Eſq; made to him, and deſired his Opinion of, were effectually anſwer'd, as well as that. But when I came to read the Book (which I have done more than once) I found myſelf egregiouſly miſtaken, in every one of them; and that inſtead of conſidering what a Man wou'd be, was he left to himſelf without *Information*, *Hint* or *Direction*, he has only obſerved what he is, and cannot but be, with theſe Helps. He has told us what *Truth* is, and wherein it reſpects the ſeveral Relations we ſtand in to God, and to one another; but he has not told us how we come by it, or whether it's an original Endowment and Quality of the Mind, inherent in and inſeparable from it, or is attainable by exteriour means. It's true he ſays, that "in ſtrict "reaſoning, nothing is required but to lay

"Steps

" Steps in a due order, firmly connected and " expreſs'd properly without flouriſh, and to " arrive at Truth by the *ſhorteſt* and *cleareſt* " Gradation that we can." By this, I ſuppoſe, he means, and I'm convinc'd he does, that it's an *acquir'd*, and not an *innate* Principle, and is only attainable, as Mr. *Locke* ſays of it, " by joining and ſeparating of Signs, as the " Things ſignified by them do agree or diſ- " agree one with another." And if this is the caſe, how has he *delineated the Religion of Nature*, but by Rules and Meaſures taken from the *Laws*, *Cuſtoms* and *Conſtitutions* of *Nations?* And how came they by theſe, but either by the *Example* and *Practice* of preceeding Ages, or by ſome *poſitive* and *expreſs* Revelation from God himſelf, or ſome one pretending to act by his Commiſſion? Is the calling Morals and Principles, thus influenc'd and thus recommended, *Natural Religion?* Are the Obſervations and Remarks which we make of the Opinions and Practices of Mankind under the beſt Information and cleareſt Conviction, to be characteriz'd and diſtinguiſh'd by the *Religion of Nature?* If ſo, then all Duties whatſoever will fall under this Denomination, and nothing can be recommended as ſuch, or be receiv'd as a common Obligation reſpecting all Mankind, but what Nature muſt have the credit of being the Parent of; whereas, in reality, nothing but a baſe and infamous Brood of dege-

nerate, unmanly and unmannerly Paſſions, a Herd of vile irregular and ungovernable Affections, are her genuine and proper Iſſue; and if ſhe was not reſtrain'd by ſome poſitive and expreſs Laws, if ſhe had not Rules preſcrib'd her what to do, and how to demean herſelf in all parts of Duty whatſoever, ſhe'd be the moſt notorious and infamous Strumpet, the moſt laſcivious and debauch'd Proſtitute that ever appear'd in the viſible Creation.

This learned Gentleman obſerves, that "*Plato* makes Virtue to conſiſt in ſuch a "likeneſs to God, as we are capable of; but, "adds he, ſince he tells us not how or by "what means we may attain to this likeneſs, "we are little the wiſer in point of Practice." Nor can I think that *Pythagoras* did this for him, when much the ſame Queſtion was put to him, in anſwering ἐὰν ἀληθεύωσι, that is, (as I'll venture to engliſh it) *if they ſpeak and act according to Truth.* For till Men know what *is Truth*, how can they come to the Practice of it? and if in the Practice of it conſiſts a *likeneſs to God*, they are never like to accompliſh the End, till firſt of all they uſe the means; and if *Nature* does not direct and inform them in that Point, how is it poſſible that ever ſhe ſhould be able to aſſiſt and help them in the other?

"Right Reaſon, ſays he, is found by the "right Uſe of our rational Faculties, and is "the ſame with Truth; but while every one

" pretends that his Reaſon is right, it leaves " room for many *Diſputes*, and *oppoſite* " *Right-Reaſons*." Here the Thing pinches; for if every Man will have his own Reaſoning to be right, be it ever ſo oppoſite and contradictory to another Man's, what is there in Nature to diſtinguiſh between them? or how ſhall it be known which is which, without ſome expreſs Law to determine the Difference?

" They, who contenting themſelves, " ſays he, with ſuperficial and tranſient " Views, deduce the Difference between " Good and Evil from the common Conſent " of Mankind, and certain Principles that " are born with us, put the matter upon a " very infirm foot; for it is much to be ſuſ- " pected there are no ſuch *innate* Maxims " as they pretend, but that the Impreſſions " of Education are miſtaken for them." Very well: if this is the Caſe, where is this *Religion of Nature* that he has undertaken to *delineate*? How is that Moral Good and Evil to be diſtinguiſh'd, wherein he makes Religion to conſiſt? Why, in underſtanding a *true Propoſition* and *Matter of Fact*, and comparing not only *Words*, but alſo *Actions* with them. A fine way to teach the common herd of Mankind how to come at the uſe of their natural Faculties! as if *true Propoſitions* and *Matter of Fact* were not the very Difficulties that perplex and diſtract

the wiſeſt of Men; or as if every one was an eye-witneſs and a judge of theſe things, however prevented by the intervention of Time, diſtance of Place, prevalency of Habit and Cuſtom, or the want of proper Qualifications and Accompliſhments to judge rightly of them.

The *perfect* Knowledge of *Good* and *Evil* is undoubtedly the Foundation of all *Religion*, becauſe in doing the one, and avoiding the other, in practiſing Virtue and abhorring Vice, in obeying what God has commanded, and abſtaining from what he has forbid, *Religion* cannot but, muſt, conſiſt. But how ſhall we be able to diſtinguiſh between the one and the other? how ſhall we know a true Propoſition from one that is falſe, a Cheat from an honeſt Man, an Impoſtor from a Prophet, a Miracle from a Juggle, *&c.* Here all the difficulty lies; and whether there is any thing in Nature capable of determining it, whether Mankind have not all along been liable to be deceiv'd and miſled in theſe Points, is beyond all queſtion: which is a plain Indication, I think, that *true Propoſitions* and *Matters of Fact* are not always attain'd to but by long Experience and hard Labour; and that *Nature*, that is *Reaſon*, cannot abſolutely determine which is which, cannot exactly diſtinguiſh Truth from Error, Right from Wrong, till all intervening Impediments and Obſtructions,

ſtructions, till all Paſſions and Prejudices, all Inclinations to deceive, and Capacities of being deceiv'd, are firſt remov'd.

That to invade another Man's Property, and to take from him by Force or Violence that which is his Right, is an Act of Oppreſſion and Injuſtice, is a *true Propoſition*; and that King *Charles* I. or his Subjects (be it which it will) did this, is a *Matter of Fact:* yet, I imagine, that it's a controverted Point with ſome People to this day, which of the two was really in fault, and it muſt continue ſo, as far as I ſee, to the World's end, if Men are not better diſpos'd, or more capable to determine the matter than they appear to be at preſent.

Inſtances of this kind are innumerable, and I dare appeal to the beſt and wiſeſt of Men, whether it's poſſible that a Man can at once ſee through and be convinc'd of the Truth and Reality of them; and if they can not, whether that *Religion* which this learned Gentleman eſtabliſhes upon them, is to be reputed natural or not. I've the Vanity to think, that they'll be of my mind, and ſay it's *acquir'd*, and not *natural*; and the rather ſo, becauſe *Moral Good and Evil* being, as Mr. *Locke* obſerves, "the conformity or diſagreement "of our voluntary Actions to ſome Law, "whereby Good and Evil is drawn on us "from the Will and Power of the Law-"maker; if we've no Notion, no natural

" Idea of ſuch a Law-maker, as he elſe-
" where argues, it's impoſſible to have a No-
" tion of a Law, and an Obligation to ob-
" ſerve it."

But I'm apt to imagine that this Gentleman, as well as ſome other learned and judicious Writers upon this Subject, mean no more by *Natural*, than what, upon a fair and candid Examination, appears *Reaſonable*; that is, what all Mankind are able to account for from the dictates of Reaſon, without having recourſe to the expreſs Will and Authority of God, only to enforce the Practice of it. For inſtance, *to do as we'd be done by*, is of *natural* Obligation, and conſequently a part of *natural* Religion, becauſe as ſoon as ever the Duty is propos'd to us, we ſee at once the reaſonableneſs of it, and cannot but own it to be incumbent upon us, tho' the expreſs Will of God, that we ſhou'd do ſo, was never urg'd: whereas in *poſitive* Duties, Duties that we cannot account for but from the expreſs and poſitive Command of God, ſuch as the two Sacraments under the Goſpel, and ſeveral ritual Ordinances under the Law, we muſt either account for theſe upon ſuch an Authority, or Reaſon cannot comprehend them; we muſt either argue from ſome poſitive and expreſs Law that the obſervance of them is a Duty, or no Reaſon whatſoever can perſuade or induce us to believe that they are ſuch. Hence it is, I preſume,

ſume, that Dr. *Tillotſon* ſays, That "the "Principles of *natural* Religion are the "Foundation of that which is *reveal'd.*" For unleſs we be firſt firmly perſuaded of the Providence of God, and of his particular Care of Mankind; unleſs we have right Notions of Him, and of his Perfections, how can we ſuppoſe that he has made any Revelation of his Will to us, or that he expects any returns of Obedience and Duty from us ſuitable thereunto?

But take the word *natural* in this Senſe, (and it muſt have this, if it has any, when it relates to Religion and Duty) yet it's as far from anſwering the Purpoſes of the *Deiſts*, as it is when it is taken for *Innate*. For if Men cannot come at the Knowledge of ſuch Duties as natural Reaſon itſelf is able to comprehend and ſee the force of, without being firſt told of them, and having them propos'd to 'em; if all Knowledge that is in the world, whether ſpeculative or practical, has been attain'd by gradual Improvements and ſlow Progreſs; if Education, Example, *&c.* have ever induced Men to think and act as thoſe they live among and converſe with; and, in a word, if Men would be Brutes, Brutes I mean in Underſtanding and Knowledge, if humane Society and Fellowſhip did not ſuggeſt and recommend to them a *rational* Converſation and Deportment: then I think we may conclude, that even *this*

Religion, this natural Knowledge of Good and Evil, which the *Deiſts* are ſuch ſtrenuous Advocates for, is all reveal'd and recommended by external Converſation and Modes of Living; and that Turks, Heathens, Jews and Chriſtians are all poſſeſs'd of it, if this be that which they contend for. For the Laws, Cuſtoms, and Conſtitutions of Nations, can at any time make, and have always made, ſuch a Religion; and I believe it not difficult to prove, that what Men have long been habituated and accuſtomed to, they've at laſt look'd upon it as a Law of Nature, and every way as obligatory as any uncontroverted Duty whatſoever. Such is the prevalency of Cuſtom, ſuch the influence of Education; and if Nature in this caſe is to be depended upon, then all Mankind are right, be their Opinions and Practices ever ſo oppoſite; and all are equally wiſe, wiſe I mean unto Salvation, let their Thoughts of the Deity and Modes of Worſhip be what they will.

I'd fain know of the *Deiſts*, if they think the Natives of *America*, in this reſpect, as wiſe as themſelves; and if not, whether there is not a Neceſſity of uſing proper Means to make 'em ſo. If ſuch Means muſt be uſed, and they cannot be ſo without the uſe of Means, pray what is this but a Revelation to ſuch People? and wherein does it differ from that of the Goſpel, or any

other Diſpenſation, but in ſome particular Circumſtances, which are not probably eſſential to the main Scope and Deſign of the Undertaking? But here I am liable to fall in with my former Arguments; and therefore here I'll ſtop, till theſe Gentlemen are pleas'd to let us know what they mean by *natural* Religion, if I have miſtaken it, and wherein it differs from that which is *reveal'd:* for I'm inclin'd to think, that it's in all *materiàl* reſpects the ſame, and differs in nothing but *Myſteries* and *Miracles*, without the one of which there can be no ſuch thing as Religion profeſs'd in the World; and without the other, it wou'd be very difficult (unleſs by compulſion and violence) to enforce and recommend it.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing Sheets were finiſh'd, and ready for the Preſs, the Author has ſeen Mr. *Chubb*'s *Diſcourſe concerning Reaſon, with regard to Religion and Divine Revelation*; wherein that Gentleman endeavours to prove, that *Reaſon* either *is*, or elſe *ought to be*, a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion. If he means that *Reaſon rightly* inform'd and influenced, is ſuch a *Guide*; or, that being aſſiſted and directed by *divine Revelation*, it becomes a proper Judge of what ought to be *believed* and *practiſed*, and what ought not; if his Meaning is, that all *Revelation* ought to be examin'd and determin'd by *Reaſon*, and that nothing is to be admitted as a *Duty* either in *Theory* or *Practice*, but what a good Reaſon may be render'd for: his Aſſertion is very juſt, and not to be objected againſt; nay, it's what every *reaſonable Man*, that is, every Man under the influence of *right Reaſon*, cannot but readily aſſent to. Becauſe it's reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God endow'd us with that very excellent and uſeful

uſeful *Faculty*, to make us capable of diſtinguiſhing between *Right* and *Wrong*, *Good* and *Evil*, and of knowing or diſcerning what Truths are worthy of him, and fit for reaſonable Creatures to receive and embrace, and what are not. But if, by that Propoſition, he means that Mankind have *natural* Abilities of knowing and doing their Duty, independent of all *Revelation*; if he ſuppoſes them capable of diſcerning and judging of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Truth and Error, without any previous *Information* or *Suggeſtion*: If he imagines them capable of knowing their Duty in all reſpects as well without, as with, any Revelation; let him but look back into the Heathen World before the Promulgation of Chriſtianity, and he may there ſee, that they were neither capable of *retaining* this Knowledge, nor yet of *recovering* it when they had loſt it. But this fatal Blunder he imputes to thoſe plaguy "*Prieſts Oracles*, and "*pretended divine Revelations* of that time; "and that theſe, and theſe only, introduced "all thoſe vile and abominable things both in "Speculation and Practice, which prevail'd "amongſt them, and which, if they had "attended to and follow'd their Reaſon, "they cou'd not poſſibly have fallen into." All this may *poſſibly* be very true; but then Mr. *Chubb* ought to have conſider'd, that they had in a great meaſure loſt their Reaſon,

that

that is, entertain'd and imbibed wrong Notions of God, and their Duty to him; or how can it be ſuppos'd that they could have been liable to be mis-led by ſuch notorious *Deluders* and *Deluſions?* It's not eaſy to imagine that Men wou'd ſuffer their Eyes to be put out, in order to be more ſafely led about and conducted by their pretended Guides. It cou'd never be, that they'd proſtitute their *Reaſon* to the moſt *ridiculous* and *unreaſonable* Suggeſtions of deſigning *Prieſts*, or that they'd ſuffer themſelves to be perſuaded that there was or cou'd be any Divinity in a *ſenſeleſs* and *ſtupid Log*, when they knew before (which they muſt do, if they knew any thing) that if there was a God, he muſt be *eternal*, *inviſible* and *incomprehenſible*. But this Gentleman ſays, that they did not attend to and follow their Reaſon; or *if they had attended to and follow'd their Reaſon, they cou'd not poſſibly have fallen into* ſuch Abſurdities. Very true; yet there is juſt as much in this notable Remark, as if he had ſaid, if Men wou'd always *be good*, they'd never *be bad*; or if they'd always take care to act *reaſonably*, they'd never do *fooliſhly*. For by *not* attending to and following their Reaſon, he ſuppoſes them liable to be mis-led by Prejudice and Paſſion, and conſequently capable of acting very oppoſitely to, and inconſiſtently with, Reaſon: and if this is the caſe, how can he fairly make it out,

out, that *Reaſon* of itſelf, and without *Revelation*, *is* or *ought to be* a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion? when by his own Conceſſion it's ſo very liable to Miſapprehenſion and Abuſe. I'm willing to think, he only means it is ſo when it is rightly inform'd, and kept under a right Oeconomy; and if this is the caſe, what better Methods cou'd be taken to reſtore it to its proper *Office* and *Duty*, when it had ſo egregiouſly digreſs'd, than a *divine Revelation*; and what can better ſupport it with Credit and Reputation therein, than the receiving and ſubmitting to that *Revelation* which has evidently manifeſted its *Divinity* by ſo doing?

That Reaſon alone is a *ſufficient Guide*, is *manifeſtly falſe*; but that *it ought* to be ſo, is *very true*. But will any Man have the hardineſs to ſay, that this is chargeable upon God, or that the *original Conſtitution of things are very defective*; or that *Man is unfairly and unequally dealt with, becauſe it is not ſo?* If my Father leaves me a good Eſtate, takes care to repleniſh my Mind with uſeful Knowledge, and puts me in a way to ſupport and demean my ſelf with Credit and Reputation while I am in the World; muſt the fault lay at his door, is he to be blamed, if I ſquander and miſ-apply theſe Bleſſings? Or if from a crazy *Stamina*, or ill Conſtitution of Body in my Father,

Father, contracted by a looſe, irregular and diſorderly Life, I ſenſibly feel my own Health prejudiced and impair'd; muſt I blaſphemouſly charge God with my Father's Folly and my Misfortune, and tell him that I am *unfairly* and *unequally* dealt with, in having ſuch a Father, and that he himſelf is ſo too, in being ſubject and giving way to ſuch fooliſh and diſtemper'd Paſſions? A very pretty way indeed of expoſtulating with my Maker! and a remarkable Inſtance of the Equity and Impartiality of human Reaſon, that can ſo tamely ſhift the blame from off itſelf, and lay it upon *the original Conſtitution of things*; that is (if I underſtand the Expreſſion) upon God!

Is it *unequal* and *unreaſonable*, Mr. *C.* that *Mankind ſhould ſtill be accountable for their Actions, and ſhould be rewarded or puniſh'd in another World, according as they behav'd themſelves in this?* What *Capacities* did they loſe in *Adam*, but what they might ſtill have retain'd if it had not been their own immediate fault? Who will ſay, that has a Faculty of *knowing Good and Evil*, and has withal the liberty of chuſing the one, and refuſing the other, that another's in fault if he makes a wrong Choice? Who ever was known to blame his Father for conveying to him an Inheritance of fooliſh and diſtemper'd Paſſions, that knows and conſiders that his Grandfather convey'd the

ſame

ſame to him? And who but you, Sir, and thoſe of your Complexion, had ever the aſſurance to ſay, that all this is owing to the *original unequal Conſtitution of things?* But I did not deſign this by way of Letter; having no inclination to engage in Controverſy, nor any intent to anſwer your Book, further than what concerns the foregoing Obſervations. Only by the way, I beg leave to obſerve, that God's ſaying, *Behold, the Man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil*, is ſo far from ſhewing that his *diſcerning Faculty* was *improv'd* by the Fall, that it refers to what the Serpent had before ſuggeſted to the Woman, (*your Eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*;) and implies that *Knowledge indeed* which the Tempter had foretold wou'd enſue thereupon; but not *that*, by any means, which the deluded Woman was in expectation of. Where's the *Improvement* then that this Knowledge made or was likely to make in *Adam*'s diſcerning Faculties? Was the experimental Knowledge of *Evil* likely to be, or procure, any Advantage to a Man that before knew nothing but good? Or does Mr. *C.* perceive ſo little propenſity to, or ſenſe of, Evil in himſelf, as to imagine it differs nothing from that *Knowledge of Evil* which is attributed to God? Surely he mightily forgot himſelf when he made the Compariſon, and talk'd of

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the Improvement; for if he believes the Relation to be true, or that *Adam* ſo fell, as is there accounted for, and that God made that Remark and Obſervation upon it; he muſt believe that it could not poſſibly admit of any ſuch Interpretation; but that the *Knowledge* which *Adam* acquir'd by that Act of Diſobedience, was, muſt be, vaſtly different from the *Knowledge* of God in the ſame reſpect. But here are evident footſteps of *Reaſon* without *Revelation!* here are ſuch manifeſt Inconſiſtencies, Contradictions, and Cavils, as *Reaſon* cannot but be guilty of, when it ſets forth without its *Guide!* Almoſt every Argument that this Gentleman has advanc'd, is a plain Proof of the Perſpicuity of his Reaſon, and that it *ſtands* entirely *upon its own bottom*, without any other ſupport whatſoever. It's true, he does not profeſs nor pretend to be an Enemy to *divine Revelation*, but ſeems to imply in one particular Paſſage, that the Chriſtian Religion is a rational Syſtem; and in this we ought charitably to ſuppoſe, (if he had dropt no *Innuendo's* to the contrary) that he was in earneſt. But look back and conſider how he treats the Fall of *Adam*; obſerve his Anſwer to the Objection, wherein it is ſaid, that *divine Juſtice was ſatisfied by the Sufferings and Death of Chriſt*, &c. and then tell me if he has given any one inſtance of his *real* Belief of ſuch a *Revelation*, or that he takes

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it to be a *rational Syſtem*, as is pretendedly intimated. No, far from it; for he ſays plainly, that ſuch Points are ſo far from being *diſcover'd* by *Reaſon*, that they are *repugnant* to it; and that "nothing can be more "repugnant to Reaſon, than that God ſhou'd "remove his Diſpleaſure from one Perſon "that is *guilty*," and lay it upon another; or, in his own Words, "by the Sufferings of "another that is *innocent*." To do this, he calls *unequal* and *unreaſonable*.

A very pretty Gentleman! What, muſt God be charg'd with doing an *unequal* and *unreaſonable* thing, becauſe it's beyond the limits of his Comprehenſion? Shall the *thing formed* ſay to *him* that *formed* it, why haſt thou made me thus? Will any one have the impudence to ſay, that it was an *unequal* and *unreaſonable* thing in God to lay on Chriſt the *Iniquities of us all?* Or was it ſo in God, to grant a general Amneſty and Pardon, upon *that* Conſideration, *for the remiſſion of Sins that are paſt*, upon condition that Mankind will comply with ſuch terms of Obedience and Duty as he is pleas'd to propoſe, for the time to come?

My Reaſon tells me, that it's an Inſtance of inexpreſſible Goodneſs in God to pardon Sin upon any terms whatſoever, and that it is much more ſo to pardon it upon ſuch terms as he himſelf was graciouſly pleas'd to propoſe to, and procure for me. My Reaſon tells me, that,

that, being a Criminal, I had no Merit of my own to plead, no Recompence in my ſelf to make, that cou'd be in any reſpect adequate to the heinouſneſs of my Guilt; and it tells me withall, if I do not mightily miſtake, that if God wou'd not pardon me without ſuch a Recompence and Satisfaction from human Nature as was not in my power, nor in any Man's elſe, in my unhappy Circumſtances, to make; that then it was highly reaſonable, extremely good and gracious in him to procure and accept of one that was in all reſpects duly qualify'd and accompliſh'd to do it for me. And ſhall I blaſphemouſly preſume to ſay, that this is *unequal* and *unreaſonable?* Dare I have the Impudence to aver, that God *diſlikes* the *Innocent*, and *approves* the *Guilty*, becauſe he requires Satisfaction for *Sin* from the ſame *Nature*, and in the ſame *innocent* State in which it was firſt committed? Is it for me, a poor, abject, worthleſs Criminal, that ſtand arraign'd, accus'd, and condemn'd, to tell my Judge, that he *approves* the *Guilty*, and *condemns* the Innocent, becauſe he declares me pardon'd, and gives me my Life, upon an equitable Recompenſe, and Satisfaction made for me? And yet in this very way, and with thoſe very Characters and Expreſſions, does this Gentleman treat God, for, what I call, and every reaſonable, conſiderate Chriſtian will do ſo too, *his infinite Mercy in Chriſt Jeſus.*

I wonder by what *Figure of Speech* it is (tho' I'm all this while digreſſing from my firſt Purpoſe) that " Men are ſaid to be " ſharers in the Benefits of Chriſt's Death, " when they are ſharers in the Benefits of " that divine Miſſion, which he laid down " his Life to maintain." If Chriſt *only* laid down his Life to maintain his divine Miſſion, in what Senſe are we to underſtand thoſe Titles and Characters of a *Mediator*, a *Propitiation*, a *Sacrifice*, a *Paſſover*, &c. by which he's repreſented and ſet forth to us? St. *Paul* ſays that he *died for us, that we are juſtified by his Blood, that we were reconcil'd to God by his Death*, and that *by his Righteouſneſs, the free Gift came upon all Men unto Juſtification of Life*. Theſe and ſuch like Expreſſions imply, one wou'd think, ſomewhat more than the bare laying down his Life in *Defence of his Miſſion*, and cannot well ſignify leſs than that he *reconcil'd us to God*, or *made ſatisfaction for the Sins of the World*, by ſo doing. But it's very likely that this Doctrine is *repugnant* to *his* Reaſon, and therefore to be rejected, and *a Figure of Speech* introduc'd in its room, in order to reconcile Scripture and Reaſon, and to make God's Diſpenſations truckle to our apprehenſions, that he may appear to do nothing that is either *unequal* or *unreaſonable*. For my part I can ſee no *Figure* in the *Speech* at all, unleſs

it be a *Catachreſis* according to his Gloſs and Interpretation; and if he will not have it that *Chriſt redeem'd us to God by his Blood* in any other Senſe, but by laying down his Life *in Defence of his Miſſion*; if he will have *no Sacrifice*, *no Oblation* or *Satisfaction* in that his Suffering; if he will have him only to die in Defence of his Doctrine, (for ſo indeed I underſtand the Expreſſion) then I can ſee no more Merit in his Death, than is in any other good Man's that ſuffers for the Truth; or that the Death of his Apoſtles, who ſuffer'd for the ſame Truth too, was any leſs a *propitiatory Sacrifice* than his was.

In this manner do Men go about to interpret and explain *Scripture*, when they cannot overthrow it, and juſt ſo is *divine Revelation* to be treated, if it is not in all reſpects ſubſervient to *human Reaſon*, and appears as legible by the dim Light of that *Candle*, as by the Sun at Noon-day. This Gentleman ſeems to be mighty jealous of the growing Power of the Clergy, and well he may; for if they are true to their truſt, if they *preach Chriſt and him crucified*, if they *conſent to wholeſome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs*; they muſt neceſſarily be for reducing *Reaſon* to the equal Standard of *divine Revelation*, and not ſuffer that which *is* or *ought to be* the

the Rule of their Miniſtry, to be in *all* Points meaſur'd by the ſhallow Comprehenſions of human Underſtanding, which cou'd never yet *attain to*, or, however, was never yet able to *retain*, even a competent ſhare of uſeful Knowledge, without *its* Information and Aſſiſtance.

To prove, that even this Gentleman, in his *Diſcourſe concerning Reaſon*, ſet out without his Guide, and is very far digreſs'd from that plain and beaten Path which he's labouring to perſuade the reſt of the World to walk in; obſerve what he ſays: namely, that "if Right and Wrong, Wiſdom and "Folly, Good and Evil, Juſt and Unjuſt, *&c.* "are not founded in Nature, but depend "upon the Will of God to conſtitute what "ſhall be each of theſe; then God might, "if he had pleas'd, have revers'd theſe: that "is, he might have conſtituted what is "Wrong to have been Right, what is Un-"juſt to have been Juſt, what is Evil to have "been Good, and the like." And again, "if Right and Wrong, Juſt and Unjuſt, *&c.* "have no foundation in Nature, and if it "depends upon the Will of God, what ſhall "or ſhall not conſtitute each of theſe; then "it muſt ſurely be allow'd, that all theſe "ſtand upon a very precarious Bottom, be-"cauſe God may be conſtantly altering his "Will and his Determinations, with reſpect "to them:" and ſo on. O brave Mr. *Chubb!*

Aude aliquid brevibus Gyaris & carcere dignum,
Si vis eſſe aliquis.

For indeed a downright Atheiſt cou'd not ſay more, nor with a better Grace. But ſuppoſing, *Good and Evil, Right and Wrong*, &c. *to be founded in Nature*; pray who *founded* them there? Is not God the Author and Creator of Nature? Was it not he that made Mankind, and endow'd them with thoſe Faculties which appear worthy of him? How can he then be ſaid to undo what he has manifeſtly done already? How can he make *Good Evil*, and *Evil Good*, if he himſelf, who is perfectly good, and who can neither do, nor countenance, Evil, has already imprinted theſe Qualities in human Nature, and has abſolutely determin'd what they are, and how to be diſtinguiſh'd? But, ſuppoſing again, that he had not abſolutely done this; ſuppoſe he had reſerv'd the Determination of Good and Evil to himſelf, and had made it precarious and doubtful which was which, till he had expreſſly reveal'd and declar'd it; pray, is not his Will to be depended upon, much rather than the faltering Suggeſtions of deprav'd vitiated Nature? Are not the Determinations of a wiſe, a juſt, and a good God, a God that can be no otherwiſe than ſo, to be preferr'd before

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the uncertain Gueſs and Conjecture of human Reaſon? Does *Right* and *Wrong*, *Good* and *Evil* ſtand upon a *very precarious Bottom*, when they depend upon the Will of God to conſtitute and appoint which ſhall be which? For my part, reaſon tells me, that they are moſt likely to meet with an equitable Determination when they are ſo plac'd. It can't ſo much as enter into my Thoughts, how the juſt Judge of all the Earth can alter the eſſential Qualities and Properties of Things, and make that *Evil*, which before he had made *Good*. Or, how any Man that pretends to believe there is a God, can thus blaſphemouſly treat his Divine Eſſence and Attributes, as to ſay, and repeat it again and again, that he *may do ſo*; that is, "conſtitute what is Good and "Wiſe to-day, to be Fooliſh and Evil to-"morrow, for any thing we know, or for "any grounds we have, from which we "may juſtly conclude to the contrary."

Was my Reaſon to ſuggeſt any ſuch Notions of God to me, and ſhou'd I ſo peremptorily aſſert and vindicate them as this Man does, I am ſure all reaſonable Men wou'd look upon and account me an audacious Infidel, an open and avowed Enemy to God and all Goodneſs, as very well they might. Are theſe proper Principles to eſtabliſh Religion and Morality upon? Can any Man ſuppoſe him juſtly worthy of internal Eſteem

and Reverence, on whom are ſtamp'd ſuch infamous and invidious Characters of mutability and variableneſs? In order to advance his Intereſt and Authority in the World, to promote the Honour of his Name, and to make his Praiſe glorious; ſurely it is highly requiſite, and of abſolute neceſſity, to entertain ſuch Conceptions of his excellent Majeſty, as are worthy of him, and ſuitable to the Perfection of his Nature, to the Eminency of his State, and to the juſt Quality of his Works and Actions: we ought to apprehend him to be, what he really is in his Nature, that is to ſay, ſuperlatively *Good*, *Wiſe*, *Powerful*, *Holy* and *Juſt*. But how are theſe Characters and Properties conſiſtent with a Being, of whom is conceiv'd a poſſibility of making *Good Evil*, and *Evil Good?* How can any Man repute him Wiſe or Good, Juſt or Holy, that believes him capable of altering the natural Conſtitution of Things, and to make that Action, that Quality or Property *Wiſe* and *Good* to-day, which he had declar'd *Fooliſh* and *Evil* yeſterday?

If theſe are the genuine Suggeſtions of *natural Reaſon* concerning God, it's not to be wonder'd that *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity* made ſuch a progreſs in the Heathen World; and in order to introduce them again, I know no Method ſo effectual, as to cry down all reveal'd Religion, which ſo apparently con-

contradicts and oppoſes that *natural* Light, thoſe *innate* Principles and Poſitions which are founded upon *Reaſon*.

But this Gentleman forgets himſelf, or at leaſt ſuppoſes what is notoriouſly falſe and groundleſs, if he imagines that Wiſdom and Folly, Good and Evil, *&c.* are *founded in Nature*, or *the original Conſtitution of Things*. If he ſuppoſes, I ſay, that Mankind were at firſt created with Faculties, capable of knowing or diſcerning *Good* and *Evil*, he ſuppoſes what *is not*, *cannot* be, true. For God, without doubt, *made Man* originally *Perfect* or *Upright*, that is, he endow'd him with Faculties accompliſh'd with the Knowledge of *Good only*. The *Evil* that is in *Nature*, does not proceed from him, is not owing to the *original Conſtitution of Things*, was not imprinted in Man at his firſt Formation and Exiſtence, but was the unhappy Effects of his Diſobedience, and became predominant by the violation of ſome poſitive expreſs Law which Man cou'd not be capable of obeying or diſobeying, till he was firſt form'd, and had Abilities given him to keep and perform it, if he had attended to and made a right uſe of them.

If it was not ſo, God muſt neceſſarily be the Author and Occaſion of *Evil* as well as *Good*, which is the moſt horrid Blaſphemy to impute to or imagine of him: and Man-

kind wou'd have been under a fatal Neceſſity of doing *Wrong* as well as *Right*, if no particular Duty, no expreſs Law or Precept had ever been enjoin'd him, but what naturally reſulted from the Dictates of his own Mind.

From hence it appears, I think, very plain, that *Evil*, however diverſified and diſtinguiſh'd, or by what Titles and Characters ſoever we denominate and expreſs it, is ſo far from having a Being in *the original Conſtitution of Things*, that it actually has no relation to 'em, cannot pretend to be co-eval with them, nor claim the ſame Birth-right or Extraction that *innocent Nature* in its *original* Formation and Conſtitution was inveſted with. So far Mr. *C.* is right, in ſaying that the *original Conſtitution of Things is wrong*, if he believes *Evil*, or a Senſe of, and Inclination to, what is ſinful and wicked, took it's riſe there. But what Notion muſt this Man have of God, the wiſe Author and Architect of Nature, to impute to or believe any ſuch thing of him? What ſort of Ideas does his Reaſon ſuggeſt to him of that infinite, eternal and omnipotent Being, that he dares preſume to ſay, that *Folly*, *Wrong*, *Evil*, *Injuſtice*, and the like, are *founded on the original Conſtitution of Things*; when he cannot but know, that God was the *original Conſtitutor* of them? If theſe are the Arguments that

Reaſon

Reaſon produces in defence of its own *Self-ſufficiency*, in matters of Religion; I'm at a loſs to know what ſort of a Religion it muſt be, that has ſuch a *Guide* and ſuch an *Advocate* to conduct and defend it; and what Belief and Obedience it will terminate in, that appears with ſuch ſurprizing Marks and Characters at firſt ſetting out.

Is it a reaſonable Religion that this Gentleman is pleading for? The Goſpel Diſpenſation will direct him to it if he'll impartially examine its Doctrine, and duly weigh and conſider the Reality of thoſe great Truths which it teaches and recommends. Having ſuch a Guide to inform and direct him, he may become a worthy Advocate in behalf of ſuch a Religion; he may there ſee what God is, what he has done for human Reaſon, and how he has graciouſly reſcued it out of thoſe Intricacies and Difficulties, Doubts and Uncertainties, under which it before labour'd, and was bewilder'd in: but if it's *Reaſon* abſtracted from this *Revelation* that he's labouring to advance the Credit of; if it's *independent natural* Knowledge, which he endeavours to perſuade us *is*, or *ought to be* a ſufficient Guide in matters of Religion, as I ſhrewdly ſuſpect it is; then I refer him to this his own *famous Diſcourſe concerning Reaſon*, and deſire him ſeriouſly to conſider the notorious Abſurdities into which it has led him, and how blaſphemouſly it has induc'd

duc'd him to treat the *ſacred Attributes* of God, upon the *right* Knowledge of which, all *true Religion* neceſſarily depends.

He ſays indeed, that "he has not intended "to injure divine Revelation, or to ſerve the "Cauſe of Infidelity," by what he has advanc'd. It may be ſo: but if it's the *divine Revelation* of the Goſpel that he has been ſo tender of; if out of regard to *this* Diſpenſation, he has *intentionally* avoided all Thoughts of advancing *the Cauſe of Infidelity*, his *Mind* and his *Pen* ſurely turn'd tails at firſt ſetting out; for it's impoſſible that any ſuch Expreſſions cou'd drop from the mouth of one that profeſſes to be a Chriſtian, or even from one that has no deſign to ſerve the *Cauſe of Infidelity*, in the very worſt Senſe and Acceptation that the Word will poſſibly admit of.

If by ſaying, that "all divine Revelation "muſt be agreeable to Reaſon," he means, that Reaſon muſt judge by the Doctrine that it advances, and the Circumſtances that attend it, whether it is *Divine*, that is, from God, and worthy of him, or not; I ſee no room to object againſt it: but to infer from thence, that it *is*, or *ought to be* a ſufficient *Guide* in matters of Religion, without telling us that it muſt have ſome *Revelation* to judge of, before it can be a Guide, is in effect to ſay, that it is *ſufficient* of itſelf for this end, without any *Revelation* at all.

But if he allows that ſome *Revelation* was, or is neceſſary to direct and inform *Reaſon*, then it follows, that Reaſon alone is not a *ſufficient Guide*, but that it's *Revelation* confirm'd by the concurring Evidence and Verdict of *right Reaſon* that is ſo. To be a *ſufficient Guide*, implies a perfect and compleat Knowledge of that Way, Science or Duty which any one undertakes to be a Guide in; but if a Man was to undertake to direct me the way to *Dover*, and then tell me that he cou'd not do it without ſomebody to direct him; if he ſhou'd enquire at every Houſe, or of every Traveller which is the Way, and for want of ſome competent Knowledge of the Road, ſhou'd miſlead and carry me out of the way, cou'd I look upon and repute him a *ſufficient* Guide? Cou'd I ſay, that he had faithfully and effectually diſcharg'd the Office and Duty he undertook? No ſurely; I might think him very honeſt and juſt to me in getting the beſt Information that he cou'd, but quite otherwiſe, if truſting to his own imperfect and confus'd Notion of the Way, he ſhou'd either lead me out of it, or make my Journey more difficult and hazardous than otherwiſe it wou'd have been.

But in this Inſtance, the Guide is in fault, becauſe he undertakes more than he's capable of performing; but with reſpect to *Reaſon*, it undertakes no more than what it *is* or *ought*

ought to be qualified for: and if it is *uncapable* of *diſcovering* any neceſſary Truths, ſuch as the *Reſurrection of the Body*, or a *Judgment to come*, it *ought* in *juſtice* and *equity* to be *ſufficient* for theſe purpoſes. So that in this, *God* and not *Reaſon* is to be blamed.

By the by, I muſt tell this Gentleman, that the *Reſurrection* and a *future Judgment* were not abſolutely unknown among the Heathen*; and therefore it cannot be ſaid that Reaſon was altogether *uncapable* of *diſcovering* them. But if it had been ſo, any reaſonable Man, but Mr. *C.* wou'd have imputed this to the Corruption and Depravity of human Nature, and to the Weakneſs and Treachery of the intellectual Faculties, rather than to God, who, as hath been before obſerv'd, cannot be chargeable with ſuch imperfections and failings.

All the Misfortunes that befel Mankind, in theſe and ſuch like reſpects, were neither owing to *God*, nor to *divine Revelation* being withheld from them. Not to *God*, becauſe he can neither be the Author nor Occaſion of Evil. Nor to the want of *divine Revelation*, for *that* they ever had from *Adam* to *Noah*, from *Noah* to *Abraham*, from *Abraham* to *Moſes*, from *Moſes* to *Chriſt*, and from *Chriſt* to this very time; ſo that they neither abſolutely *wanted* it,

* Clem. Alexand. Stromat. *lib.* 5.

nor

nor was it *withheld* from them; but their over-much Knowledge, that is, their Knowledge of Evil had furniſh'd them with over-many headſtrong and unruly Paſſions, it had made them *wiſe* unto Evil, and obſtinately *ſimple* or ignorant concerning Good. It had render'd them liable to *ſtrong Deluſions*, and very ready and willing *to believe a Lye:* and therefore God, in juſtice, gave them up to their own Hearts Luſt, to follow their own Imaginations, which, in proceſs of time, plung'd the greateſt part of the World into all that ſurprizing ſtupidity and ignorance in which Chriſtianity found it.

This, I've the vanity to think, is a rational Account of the fatal degeneracy of Mankind in the Heathen World, and the ſame Reaſon ſeems to hold good with regard to the preſent times. Indolence and Senſuality, Ambition and Avarice have introduc'd Idolatry in one place, Infidelity in another, Superſtition in another. The *Arians* and Orthodox quarrel'd about the Divinity of our Saviour, (a Myſtery more becoming pur-blind Reaſon to believe, than officiouſly to pry into) till *Mahometiſm* came and diveſted them both of their Religion and Liberty. The Emperor *Phocus* conſtituted the ambitious Pope univerſal Biſhop, and ever ſince his Succeſſors have been claiming and uſurping an univerſal Authority, both over the Bodies and Souls of Men. And among Proteſtants, the *Supra-*

lapſarians

lapſarians and *Sublapſarians* fell out about abſolute *Predeſtination* and *Election*, which Controverſy introduc'd *Socinianiſm*, or an Opinion that Nature was free, and needed no inward Grace; and that again has uſher'd in *Deiſm*, which has cut the *Gordian Knot*, becauſe it cou'd not untie it, and has diſclaim'd all *reveal'd Religion*, becauſe there is ſomething there, forſooth, that the penetrating Eye of human Reaſon cannot account for, without taking and depending on *God's Word* only.

But ſays the Author of the *Diſcourſe*, " We cannot form any Judgment, with reſpect " to a Revelation, whether it be Divine or " not; becauſe we cannot poſſibly have any " previous Principle to reaſon from, with re- " gard to it." No, how ſhou'd indeed a Man *form any ſuch Judgment*, or *have any good previous Principle*, that thinks " it depends " upon the Will of God, to conſtitute what " ſhall be Good or Evil, Juſt or Unjuſt, " Right or Wrong to his Creatures?" A *right Judgment* I'm ſure is never to be form'd from ſuch *Principles*, and if this Gentleman cannot rectify and make *his* better, I can tell him that he'll not only never be able to make a *right Judgment* of *Revelation*, but he'll be unavoidably *ne plus'd* in his *Reaſon*, as he is already, and conclude at laſt, that God has dealt hardly by him, to deprive him of both, if he does not conclude (which

is

is every whit as likely) that *there is no God.*

" All Religion, ſays Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, " is founded on right Notions of God, and " of his divine Perfections: inſomuch, that " divine Revelation itſelf does ſuppoſe theſe " for its Foundation, and can ſignify no- " thing to us, unleſs theſe be firſt known " and believ'd: for unleſs we be firſt firmly " perſuaded of the Providence of God, and " of his particular Care of Mankind, why " ſhou'd we ſuppoſe that he makes any Re- " velation of his Will to us? Unleſs it be " firſt naturally known that God is a God " of Truth, what ground is there for the " belief of his Word? So that the Principles " of natural Religion," or the right Knowledge of his Eſſence and Attributes, " are the " Foundation of that which is reveal'd: and " therefore nothing can in reaſon be admit- " ted to be a Revelation from God, which " does plainly contradict his eſſential Per- " fections."

This is a Truth ſo manifeſt and plain, that it's no wonder why Mr. *C.* cannot form any Judgment, whether a Revelation be divine or not, when he betrays ſuch wild Notions of the divine Perfections, and ſuppoſes Right and Wrong, Good and Evil to *be founded in Nature*, and that God did not only conſtitute both, but may, if he will, alter their eſſential Properties, and make *Evil Good*, and *Good Evil.* It's

It's abſolutely impoſſible that any Man ſhou'd judge of a *Revelation*, who has ſuch an opinion of the *divine Perfections*. It's much more natural to ſuppoſe there is no God, than to imagine he cou'd ever make any Revelation of his Will, capable of directing Mankind what they ought to believe, and how they ought to live if he's ſo diſpos'd; and if this Gentleman does not take care to inform himſelf better as to theſe Points, before he determines in favour of any *Revelation*, or even before he reſigns himſelf wholly up to the Guidance and Direction of *natural Reaſon*, he may live to ſee himſelf pointed at, and reputed an *Infidel*, a *Deiſt*, a *Sceptick*, an *Atheiſt*, or may have his Name tranſmitted to poſterity for the *Author* and *Founder* of ſuch Sects, but will never be able to oblige his admirers and followers with any *compleat* Body of *natural* Divinity, ſufficient to ſquare and regulate their Lives by.

But I can tell this Gentleman, that the *preſent Conſtitution of Things* ſuppoſes a *Revelation*, and that it was abſolutely neceſſary to inform Mankind how they became ſo unhappily *conſtituted*, as they are. For I hope by this time he's convinc'd that they cou'd not be *originally* ſo, and what reaſon cou'd ever tell him that it was owing to the firſt Man, any more than that God was the occaſion of it? But if he believes that God ever yet made any Revelation of his Will

to

to Mankind, I hope he'll allow the *Decalogue* or Ten Commandments to be ſuch; and theſe, as *Puffendorf* obſerves, being generally conceiv'd in negative Precepts, manifeſtly ſuppoſe, that human Nature is corrupted.

" For, ſays he, the firſt Commandment " ſuppoſes Man to be prone to Idolatry and " Polytheiſm, by ſaying, *Thou ſhalt have no* " *other Gods but me*; for if it was not ſo, " that human Nature is corrupted, how cou'd " it enter into any Man's head to worſhip any " thing but the true God, or believe that " there cou'd be any Divinity in that fictitious Deity which he worſhipp'd as a God? " There had been no need to expreſs the " Precept in negative Terms, as, *Thou ſhalt* " *not worſhip any ſtrange Gods*; but a ſimple and affirmative Command had been " ſufficient, namely, Thou ſhalt love, honour " and worſhip that God whom thou knoweſt " to be the Creator of thee, and of the whole " Univerſe." And again, if Man was in the " ſame State and Condition in which he was " at firſt created, there had been no need to " ſay, *Thou ſhalt not Kill, Thou ſhall not* " *commit Adultery, Thou ſhalt not Steal*, &c. " for in a ſtate of Innocency, Men cou'd not " be liable to any ſuch Accidents and Paſſions, nor cou'd they be guilty of doing " any of thoſe things which ſuch negative " Precepts plainly ſuppoſe them prone to " now."

" Beſides, ſays he, there are many affir-
" mative Precepts, which are reputed the
" Dictates of the *Law of Nature*, of which
" there had been no need, had Mankind con-
" tinued in that happy State in which they
" were at firſt created; for inſtance, it's one
" of the Dictates of that *Law*, that we
" ſhou'd not impoſe upon one another in
" buying and ſelling, that we ſhou'd not
" make uſe of falſe Weights and Meaſures,
" *&c.* but it does not appear, if Men had
" continued without Sin, that there wou'd
" have been any ſuch Trade and Commerce
" among them, as is now, or any need of
" thoſe things which ſuch a Law ſuppoſes
" liable to miſapplication and abuſe." And
again,

" By the Law of Nature, we are com-
" manded to *aſſiſt the Needy*, *relieve the*
" *Oppreſſed*, to *take care of the Widows*
" *and Fatherleſs*, to *forgive Injuries*, and
" to *reconcile Differences*; but theſe were
" needleſs Injunctions, when Men were
" neither obnoxious to trouble, want, miſery
" nor death, nor yet capable of diſturbing
" the Peace and Quiet of human Society.
" This is plain and manifeſt, ſays that Great
" Man, in negative Precepts, ſo far as they
" reſpect the Law of Nature, or natural
" right. And, altho' every affirmative Pre-
" cept, virtually implies a negative, (*v. g.*
" He that's commanded to love his Neigh-
" bour,

" bour, is thereby forbid to hate or injure " him) yet it ſeems very ſuperfluous and " needleſs, that ſuch or ſuch Duties ſhou'd " be enjoin'd by expreſs Laws, when Mankind " had no corrupt Inclinations, no irregular " Appetites or Paſſions to induce them to " act otherwiſe." From whence I obſerve,

1*ſt*, That what we uſually call the *Law of Nature*, is nothing elſe but the reſult of poſitive and expreſs Laws, made to keep Mankind within the Bounds of their Duty, after human Nature was corrupted, and Men became unhappily ſubject to ſuch vile Affections, Paſſions and Appetites, as in a State of Innocency, they cou'd not but be entirely free from. Which confirms me in the Opinion I've before given, that what we uſually call *natural Religion*, is the very Effects of *Cuſtom*, *Education*, *Tradition*, or ſome *poſitive* and *expreſs* Law; for if it was not ſo, how can we ſuppoſe, either negative or poſitive Precepts (which include Religion) to be at all requiſite, when Men cou'd not but both know and do their Duty without them? Or how can we imagine that any ſuch *Religion* is *natural*, when we cannot but know that the great Author of *Nature* made Man *upright*, and conſequently endow'd him with Capacities of knowing and doing his Duty without any ſuch *Law*, as *natural Religion*, according to its preſent acceptation, neceſſarily ſuppoſes?

2. I obſerve, that human Nature being corrupted, there was an abſolute neceſſity of a *divine Revelation*, and that Mankind (conſidering the fatal Degeneracy into which they were fallen) cou'd never have *perfectly* known Right from Wrong, Good from Evil, but by ſuch a *Revelation*. For we ſee, that even the Chriſtian Diſpenſation (the beſt and moſt compleat *Revelation* that ever the World was oblig'd with) is not able to withſtand the Paſſions and Intereſts of weak and wicked Men, even, where it's profeſs'd and receiv'd; and how can it be ſuppos'd the Caſe wou'd have been better, had Men been left to themſelves, without any Information or Direction, but what their own confus'd and diſtracted Notions of things ſuggeſted to 'em?

It's not near ſo hard, I imagine, to judge of a *Revelation*, whether it be *divine or not*, as it is to diſentangle ourſelves of thoſe unhappy Prejudices and Paſſions which both hinder us from judging rightly, and induce us to act quite contrary to the very beſt judgment we are able to make. It's no hard matter, one wou'd think, to have right Notions of God and his *divine Perfections*, and from thence, to judge what *Revelation* is worthy of him, and what not: it appears pretty eaſy to determine, whether the Principles of *Heatheniſm*, *Mahometiſm*, or *Chriſtianity*, are moſt agreeable to theſe *Perfections*; but it's not ſo eaſy to induce Men to a conformity there-

thereunto in their Lives and Actions, nor to convince and reclaim them when they apparently act otherwiſe: for I very much queſtion, whether all I have ſaid, or am able to ſay, will engage Mr. *C.* to think or ſpeak otherwiſe than he has already expreſs'd himſelf, or diſſuade him from that inconſiſtent way of reaſoning he ſeems to be in, becauſe it's very likely he may be prejudic'd in favour of his own Notions, or may have ſome ſiniſter ends to ſerve, by entertaining and divulging them. But if I ask him which of theſe three Opinions or Perſuaſions he thinks moſt agreeable to the divine Perfections; if I lay before him the ſeveral Principles of a *Heathen*, a *Mahometan* and a *Chriſtian*, and deſire him to ſay which of 'em are moſt conſiſtent with *his* Apprehenſions of God and his Attributes, there's no reaſon to doubt but he'll readily give me ſatisfaction in that Point; whereas, it may be, he has many Difficulties to ſtruggle with, many Obligations and Engagements to get over, before he can come to a reſolution in the other. From hence it's much eaſier, I think, to judge of a *Revelation*, whether it be *divine or not*, than *without a Revelation*, or even, in many caſes, *with a divine Revelation*, whether in our Life and Practice we are *right or not*.

I wou'd not be underſtood to mean, that ſuch a *Revelation* has, or can have any thing doubtful or queſtionable in it, that gives us right

right Conceptions of the Deity, and enjoins ſuch reaſonable Acts of Obedience and Duty as are worthy of a *juſt*, a *wiſe*, and a *good* God to accept of. Nor do I think it at all hard to judge of ſuch a Revelation, if it tends to make Men ſincerely good and virtuous, upon ſuch generous Motives and Principles, as our beſt Conceptions of God and his Attributes are able to ſuggeſt to us, or apprehend; but, by ſaying, that it's not very eaſy to judge of our moral Actions and Behaviour, even *with a divine Revelation*, I mean, that *Self-love*, *Self-will*, *Self-intereſt*, *Self-conceit*, &c. are ſo apt to foreſtall our Judgments, and biaſs our Affections, that they generally prejudice us in their favour, and we're not eaſily drawn off from that Complacency and good Liking of ourſelves, our Intereſts and Paſſions, which they unavoidably poſſeſs us with. We are apt to impoſe upon ourſelves, either, by aſſuming falſe, or miſrating true Advantages. Our Minds are generally ſtuff'd with Dreams and phantaſtick Imaginations, inſtead of wiſe and ſober Thoughts; and what is *really good* or *really evil* in its own Nature, often receives a quite contrary Character and Impreſſion from our miſguided Judgments, which we are apt to place a kind of Omniſcience and Infallibility in.

If this Obſervation any way concerns Mr. *C.* or his miſguided Admirers, I leave them to make the Application. I'm ſure it's true in general,

general, but whether it's their caſe in particular, is beſt known to themſelves; or however may be ſo, if they'll fairly and impartially examine their own Hearts, which, it's to be own'd, is a work of ſome difficulty, more by far, I'll venture to affirm, than it is to judge of a *Revelation*, whether it be *divine or not*, if they are Maſters of *right Reaſon*, that is, if they have *right* notions of the *divine Perfections*, on which the wiſeſt and ſureſt Reaſonings in Religion *unqueſtionably* depend.

I ſhall conclude, with telling this Gentleman, and the reſt of his Complexion, that, if after all they have ſaid of the *Sufficiency of Reaſon*, (and in mine Opinion, they've ſaid nothing yet that's *ſufficient* to convince a *reaſonable* Man, that is, a Man under the Influence of *right Reaſon*) if, I ſay, it ſhou'd appear, that true and right inform'd Reaſon dictates, and cannot but aſſent to thoſe great Truths which they have ſet themſelves to oppoſe; if it muſt need give into the Chriſtian Inſtitution, as undoubtedly of God; if in matters of Religion, *human Reaſon* and *divine Revelation* muſt, and cannot but concur to ſupport and aſſiſt one another; and if *Chriſtianity* is that very Religion, and that only, which *right Reaſon* appears in Defence of: then let them conſider what it plainly declares, and threatens to thoſe who will reject it, and be Unbelievers ſtill; (*i. e.*) who are incurably

curably perverse, and will shut their Eyes against its Light, and obstinately refuse to be led by it.

If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

He that believeth on him, is not condemn'd, but he that believeth not, is condemn'd already, because he hath not believ'd in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil†.

It had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment deliver'd unto them. But it is happen'd unto them according to the true Proverb, the Dog is turn'd to his own vomit again, and the Sow that was wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire‡.

* John vii. 17. Χάριτι γὰρ σωζόμεθα οὐκ ἄνευ μέν τοι τῶν καλῶν ἔργων. ἀλλὰ δεῖ ἃ πεφυκότας πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν σπουδήν τινα περιποιήσασθαι πρὸς αὐτό. δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὴν γνώμην ὑγιῆ κεκτῆσθαι, τὴν ἀμετανόητον πρὸς τὴν θήραν τοῦ καλοῦ. πρὸς ὅπερ μάλιστα τῆς θείας χρήζομεν χάριτος, διδασκαλίας τε ὀρθῆς καὶ εὐπαθείας ἁγνῆς καὶ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁλκῆς. Clem. Alexand. Strom. *lib.* 5.

† John iii. 18, 19. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

FINIS.